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Life of George Washington

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LIFE OF WASHINGTON.

Chapter I.

Correspondence of Washington and Schuyler on the Disasters in Canada — Reinforcements Required from New England—Dangers in the Interior of New York—Johnson Hall Beleaguered—Sir John Capitulates—Generous Conduct of Schuyler—Governor Tryon and the Tories—Tory Machinations—Lee at New York—Sir Henry Clinton in the Harbor—Menaces of Lee—The City and River Fortified—Lee's Treatment of the Tories—His Plans of Fortification—Ordered to the Command in Canada—His Speculations on Titles of Dignity.

SCHUYLER'S letter to Washington, announcing the recent events, was written with manly feeling. "I wish," said he, "I had no occasion to send my dear general this melancholy account. My amiable friend, the gallant Montgomery, is no more;

the brave Arnold is wounded; and we have met with a severe check in an unsuccessful attempt on Quebec. May Heaven be graciously pleased that the misfortune may terminate here: I tremble for our people in Canada."

Alluding to his recent request to retire from the army, he writes: "Our affairs are much worse than when I made the request. This is motive sufficient for me to continue to serve my country in any way I can be thought most serviceable; but my utmost can be but little, weak and indisposed as I am."

Washington was deeply moved by the disastrous intelligence. "I most sincerely condole with you," writes he, in reply to Schuyler, "upon the fall of the brave and worthy Montgomery. In the death of this gentleman, America has sustained a heavy loss. I am much concerned for the intrepid and enterprising Arnold, and greatly fear that consequences of the most alarming nature will result from this well-intended but unfortunate attempt."

General Schuyler, who was now in Albany, urged the necessity of an immediate reinforcement of three thousand men for the army in Canada. Washington had not a man to spare from the army before Boston. He applied, therefore, on his own responsibility, to Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Connecticut,

for three regiments, which were granted. His prompt measure received the approbation of Congress, and further reinforcements were ordered from the same headquarters.

Solicitude was awakened about the interior of the province of New York. Arms and ammunition were said to be concealed in Tryon County, and numbers of the tories in that neighborhood preparing for hostilities. Sir John Johnson had fortified Johnson Hall, gathered about him his Scotch Highland tenants and Indian allies, and it was rumored he intended to carry fire and sword along the valley of the Mohawk.

Schuyler, in consequence, received orders from Congress to take measures for securing the military stores, disarming the disaffected, and apprehending their chiefs. He forthwith hastened from Albany, at the head of a body of soldiers; was joined by Colonel Herkimer, with the militia of Tryon County marshalled forth on the frozen bosom of the Mohawk River, and appeared before Sir John's stronghold, near Johnstown, on the 19th of January.

Thus beleaguered, Sir John, after much negotiation, capitulated. He was to surrender all weapons of war and military stores in his possession, and to give his parole not to take arms against America. On these conditions he was

to be at liberty to go as far westward in Tryon County as the German Flats and Kingsland districts, and to every part of the colony to the southward and eastward of these districts; provided he did not go into any seaport town.

Sir John intimated a trust that he, and the gentlemen with him, would be permitted to retain such arms as were their own property. The reply was characteristic: "General Schuyler's feelings as a gentleman induce him to consent that Sir John Johnson may retain the few favorite family arms, he making a list of them. General Schuyler never refused a gentleman his side-arms."

The capitulation being adjusted, Schuyler ordered his troops to be drawn up in line at noon (Jan. 20th), between his quarters and the court-house, to receive the surrender of the Highlanders, enjoining profound silence on his officers and men, when the surrender should be made. Everything was conducted with great regard to the feelings of Sir John's Scottish adherents; they marched to the front, grounded their arms, and were dismissed with exhortations to good behavior.

The conduct of Schuyler, throughout this affair, drew forth a resolution of Congress, applauding him for his fidelity, prudence, and expedition, and the proper temper he had

maintained toward the "deluded people" in question. Washington, too, congratulated him on his success. "I hope," writes he, "General Lee will execute a work of the same kind on Long Island. It is high time to begin with our internal foes, when we are threatened with such severity of chastisement from our kind parent without."

The recent reverses in Canada had, in fact, heightened the solicitude of Washington about the province of New York. That province was the central link in the confederacy; but he feared it might prove a brittle one. We have already mentioned the adverse influences in operation there. A large number of friends to the crown, among the official and commercial classes; rank tories (as they were called), in the city and about the neighboring country; particularly on Long and Staten Islands; king's ships at anchor in the bay and harbor, keeping up a suspicious intercourse with the citizens; while Governor Tryon, castled, as it were, on board one of these ships, carried on intrigues with those disaffected to the popular cause, in all parts of the neighborhood. County committees had been empowered by the New York Congress and Convention, to apprehend all persons notoriously disaffected, to examine into their conduct, and ascertain

whether they were guilty of any hostile act or machination. Imprisonment or banishment was the penalty. The committees could call upon the militia to aid in the discharge of their functions. Still, disaffection to the cause was said to be rife in the province, and Washington looked to General Lee for effective measures to suppress it.

Lee arrived at New York on the 4th of February, his caustic humors sharpened by a severe attack of the gout, which had rendered it necessary, while on the march, to carry him for a considerable part of the way in a litter. His correspondence is a complete mental barometer. "I consider it as a piece of the greatest good fortune," writes he to Washington (Feb. 5th), "that the Congress have detached a committee to this place, otherwise I should have made a most ridiculous figure, besides bringing upon myself the enmity of the whole province. My hands were effectually tied up from taking any step necessary for the public service by the late resolve of Congress, putting every detachment of the continental forces under the command of the Provincial Congress where such detachment is."

By a singular coincidence, on the very day of his arrival, Sir Henry Clinton, with the squadron which had sailed so mysteriously from

Boston, looked into the harbor. "Though it was Sabbath," says a letter-writer of the day, "it threw the whole city into such a convulsion as it never knew before. Many of the inhabitants hastened to move their effects into the country, expecting an immediate conflict. All that day and all night were there carts going and boats loading, and women and children crying, and distressed voices heard in the roads in the dead of the night." *

Clinton sent for the mayor, and expressed much surprise and concern at the distress caused by his arrival; which was merely, he said, on a short visit to his friend Tryon, and to see how matters stood. He professed a juvenile love for the place, and desired that the inhabitants might be informed of the purport of his visit, and that he would go away as soon as possible.

"He brought no troops with him," writes Lee, "and pledges his honor that none are coming. He says it is merely a visit to his friend Tryon. If it is really so, it is the most whimsical piece of civility I ever heard of."

A gentleman in New York, writing to a friend in Philadelphia, reports one of the general's characteristic menaces, which kept the town in a fever:

* *Remembrancer*, vol. iii.

"Lee says he will send word on board of the men-of-war, that, if they set a house on fire, he will chain a hundred of their friends by the neck, and make the house their funeral pile."*

For this time, the inhabitants of New York were let off for their fears. Clinton, after a brief visit, continued his mysterious cruise, openly avowing his destination to be North Carolina—which nobody believed, simply because he avowed it.

The Duke of Manchester, speaking in the House of Lords of the conduct of Clinton, contrasts it with that of Lord Dunmore, who wrapped Norfolk in flames. "I will pass no censure on that noble lord," said he, "but I could wish that he had acted with that generous spirit that forbade Clinton to uselessly destroy the town of New York. My lords, Clinton visited New York; the inhabitants expected its destruction. Lee appeared before it with an army too powerful to be attacked, and Clinton passed by without doing any wanton damage."

The necessity of conferring with committees at every step, was a hard restraint upon a man of Lee's ardent and impatient temper, who had a soldierlike contempt for the men of peace

* *Am. Archives*, 5th Series, iv., 941.

around him; yet at the outset he bore it better than might have been expected.

"The Congress committees, a certain number of the committees of safety, and your humble servant," writes he to Washington, "have had two conferences. The result is such as will agreeably surprise you. It is in the first place agreed, and justly, that to fortify the town against shipping is impracticable; but we are to fortify lodgments on some commanding part of the city for two thousand men. We are to erect inclosed batteries on both sides of the water, near Hell Gate, which will answer the double purpose of securing the town against piracies through the Sound, and secure our communication with Long Island, now become a more important point than ever; as it is determined to form a strong fortified camp of three thousand men, on the island, immediately opposite to New York. The pass in the Highlands is to be made as respectable as possible, and guarded by a battalion. In short, I think the plan judicious and complete."

In the pass in the Highlands above alluded to, is that grand defile of the Hudson, where, for upwards of fifteen miles, it wends its deep channel between stern, forest-clad mountains and rocky promontories. Two forts, about six miles distant from each other, and commanding

narrow parts of the river at its bends through these Highlands, had been commenced in the preceding autumn, by order of the Continental Congress; but they were said to be insufficient for the security of that important pass, and were to be extended and strengthened.

Washington had charged Lee, in his instructions, to keep a stern eye upon the tories, who were active in New York. "You can seize upon the persons of the principals," said he; "they must be so notoriously known, that there will be little danger of committing mistakes." Lee acted up to the letter of these instructions, and weeded out with a vigorous hand some of the rankest of the growth. This gave great offense to the peace-loving citizens, who insisted that he was arrogating a power vested solely in the civil authority. One of them, well-affected to the cause, writes: "To see the vast number of houses shut up, one would think the city almost evacuated. Women and children are scarcely to be seen in the streets. Troops are daily coming in; they break open and quarter themselves in any house they find shut." *

The enemy, too, regarded his measures with apprehension. "That arch rebel Lee," writes a British officer, "has driven all the well-af-

* Fred. Rhinelander to Peter Van Schaack, Feb. 23.

fected people from the town of New York. If something is not speedily done, His Britannic Majesty's American dominions will be confined within a very narrow compass." *

In the exercise of his military functions, Lee set Governor Tryon and the captain of the *Asia* at defiance. "They had threatened perdition to the town," writes he to Washington, "if the cannon were removed from the batteries and wharves, but I ever considered their threats as a *brutum fulmen*, and even persuaded the town to be of the same way of thinking. We accordingly conveyed them to a place of safety in the middle of the day, and no cannonade ensued. Captain Parker publishes a pleasant reason for his passive conduct. He says that it was manifestly my intention, and that of the New England men under my command, to bring destruction on this town, so hated for their loyal principles, but that he was determined not to indulge us; so remained quiet out of spite. The people here laugh at his nonsense, and begin to despise the menaces which formerly used to throw them into convulsions."

Washington appears to have shared the merriment. In his reply to Lee, he writes, "I could not avoid laughing at Captain Par-

* *Am. Archives*, vol. v., 425.

ker's reasons for not putting his repeated threats into execution,"—a proof, by the way, under his own hand, that he could laugh occasionally; and even when surrounded by perplexities.

According to Lee's account, the New Yorkers showed a wonderful alacrity in removing the cannon. "Men and boys of all ages," writes he, "worked with the greatest zeal and pleasure. I really believe the generality are as well-affected as any on the continent." Some of the well-affected, however, thought he was rather too self-willed and high-handed. "Though General Lee has many things to recommend him as a general," writes one of them, "yet I think he was out of luck when he ordered the removal of the guns from the battery, as it was without the approbation or knowledge of our Congress."* Lee seldom waited for the approbation of Congress in moments of exigency.

He now proceeded with his plan of defenses. A strong redoubt, capable of holding three hundred men, was commenced at Horen's Hook, commanding the pass at Hell Gate, so as to block up from the enemy's ships the passage between the mainland and Long Island. A regiment was stationed on the island, mak-

* Fred. Rhinelander to Peter Van Schaack.

ing fascines, and preparing other materials for constructing the works for an intrenched camp, which, Lee hoped would render it impossible for the enemy to get a footing there. "What to do with this city," writes he, "I own, puzzles me. It is so encircled with deep navigable water, that whoever commands the sea must command the town. To-morrow I shall begin to dismantle that part of the fort next to the town, to prevent its being converted into a citadel. I shall barrier the principal streets, and, at least, if I cannot make it a continental garrison, it shall be a disputable field of battle." Batteries were to be erected on an eminence behind Trinity Church, to keep the enemy's ships at so great a distance as not to injure the town.

King's Bridge, at the upper end of Manhattan or New York Island, linking it with the mainland, was pronounced by Lee "a most important pass, without which the city could have no communication with Connecticut." It was, therefore, to be made as strong as possible.

Heavy cannon were to be sent up to the forts in the Highlands, which were to be enlarged and strengthened.

In the midst of his schemes, Lee received orders from Congress to the command in Can-

ada, vacant by the death of Montgomery. He bewailed the defenseless condition of the city; the Continental Congress, as he said, not having as yet taken the least step for its security. "The instant I leave it," said he, "I conclude the Provincial Congress, and the inhabitants in general, will relapse into their former hysterics. The men-of-war and Mr. Tryon will return to their old station at the wharves, and the first regiments who arrive from England will take quiet possession of the town and Long Island."

It must be observed that, in consequence of his military demonstrations in the city, the enemy's ships had drawn off and dropped down the bay; and he had taken vigorous measures, without consulting the committees, to put an end to the practice of supplying them with provisions.

"Governor Tryon and the *Asia*," writes he to Washington, "continue between Nutten and Bedlow's Islands. It has pleased his Excellency, in violation of the compact he has made, to seize several vessels from Jersey laden with flour. It has, in return, pleased my Excellency to stop all provisions from the city, and cut off all intercourse with him,—a measure which has thrown the mayor, council, and tories into agonies. The propensity, or rather rage, for

King's Bridge, About 1776.

Redrawn from Valentine's "Manual."

eral officers opposed to it. He had hoped some favorable opportunity would present, when, the harbor being frozen, the troops might approach the town upon the ice. The winter, however, though severe at first, proved a mild one, and the bay continued open. General Putnam, in the meantime, having completed the new works at Lechmere Point, and being desirous of keeping up the spirit of his men, resolved to treat them to an exploit. Accordingly, from his "impregnable fortress" of Cobble Hill, he detached a party of about two hundred, under his favorite officer, Major Knowlton, to surprise and capture a British guard stationed at Charlestown. It was a daring enterprise, and executed with spirit. As Charlestown Neck was completely protected, Knowlton led his men across the mill-dam, round the base of the hill, and immediately below the fort; set fire to the guard-house and some buildings in its vicinity; made several prisoners, and retired without loss, although thundered upon by the cannon of the fort. The exploit was attended by a dramatic effect on which Putnam had not calculated. The British officers, early in the winter, had fitted up a theatre, which was well attended by the troops and tories. On the evening in question, an after-piece was to be performed, entitled,

The Blockade of Boston, intended as a burlesque on the patriotic army which was beleaguering it. Washington is said to have been represented in it as an awkward lout, equipped with a huge wig, and a long rusty sword, attended by a country booby as orderly sergeant, in rustic garb, with an old firelock seven or eight feet long.

The theatre was crowded, especially by the military. The first piece was over, and the curtain was rising for the farce, when a sergeant made his appearance, and announced that "the alarm guns were firing at Charlestown, and the Yankees attacking Bunker's Hill." At first this was supposed to be a part of the entertainment, until General Howe gave the word, "Officers, to your alarm posts."

Great confusion ensued; every one scrambled out of the theatre as fast as possible. There was, as usual, some shrieking and fainting of ladies; and the farce of *The Blockade of Boston* had a more serious than comic termination.

The London *Chronicle*, in a sneering comment on Boston affairs, gave Burgoyne as the author of this burlesque afterpiece, though perhaps unjustly. "General Burgoyne has opened a theatrical campaign, of which himself is sole manager, being determined to act with the

provincials on the defensive only. Tom Thumb has been already represented; while, on the other hand, the provincials are preparing to exhibit, early in the spring, 'Measure for Measure.'"

The British officers, like all soldiers by profession, endeavored to while away the time by every amusement within their reach; but, in truth, the condition of the besieged town was daily becoming more and more distressing. The inhabitants were without flour, pulse, or vegetables; the troops were nearly as destitute. There was a lack of fuel, too, as well as food. The small-pox broke out, and it was necessary to inoculate the army. Men, women, and children either left the city voluntarily, or were sent out of it; yet the distress increased. Several houses were broken open and plundered; others were demolished by the soldiery for fuel. General Howe resorted to the sternest measures to put a stop to these excesses. The provost was ordered to go the rounds with the hangman, and hang up the first man he should detect in the fact, without waiting for further proof for trial. Offenders were punished with four hundred, six hundred, and even one thousand lashes. The wife of a private soldier, convicted of receiving stolen goods, was sentenced to one hundred lashes

on her bare back, at the cart's tail, in different parts of the town, and an imprisonment of three months.

Meanwhile, Washington was incessantly goaded by the impatient murmurs of the public, as we may judge by his letters to Mr. Reed. "I know the integrity of my own heart," writes he, on the 10th of February; "but to declare it, unless to a friend, may be an argument of vanity. I know the unhappy predicament I stand in; I know that much is expected of me; I know that, without men, without arms, without ammunition, without anything fit for the accommodation of a soldier, little is to be done; and, what is mortifying, I know that I cannot stand justified to the world without exposing my own weakness, and injuring the cause, by declaring my wants; which I am determined not to do, further than unavoidable necessity brings every man acquainted with them.

"My own situation is so irksome to me at times, that, if I did not consult the public good more than my own tranquillity, I should long ere this have put everything on the cast of a die. So far from my having an army of twenty thousand men, well armed, I have been here with less than one half that number, including sick, furloughed, and on command; and those

neither armed nor clothed as they should be. In short, my situation has been such, that I have been obliged to use art to conceal it from my own officers."

How precious are those letters! And how fortunate that the absence of Mr. Reed from camp, should have procured for us such confidential outpourings of Washington's heart at this time of its great trial.

He still adhered to his opinion in favor of an attempt upon the town. He was aware that it would be attended with considerable loss, but believed it would be successful if the men should behave well. Within a few days after the date of this letter, the bay became sufficiently frozen for the transportation of troops. "This," writes he to Reed, "I thought, knowing the ice would not last, a favorable opportunity to make an assault upon the troops in town. I proposed it in council; but behold, though we had been waiting all the year for this favorable event, the enterprise was thought too dangerous. Perhaps it was; perhaps the irksomeness of my situation led me to undertake more than could be warranted by prudence. I did not think so, and I am sure yet that the enterprise, if it had been undertaken with resolution, must have succeeded; without it, any would fail."

His proposition was too bold for the field-officers assembled in council (Feb. 16th), who objected that there was not force, nor arms and ammunition sufficient in camp for such an attempt. Washington acquiesced in the decision, it being almost unanimous; yet he felt the irksomeness of his situation. "To have the eyes of the whole continent," said he, "fixed with anxious expectation of hearing of some great event, and to be restrained in every military operation for want of the necessary means of carrying it on, is not very pleasing, especially as the means used to conceal my weakness from the enemy, conceal it also from our friends, and add to their wonder.

In the council of war above mentioned, a cannonade and bombardment were considered advisable, as soon as there should be a sufficiency of powder; in the meantime, preparations might be made for taking possession of Dorchester Heights and Noddle's Island.

At length the camp was rejoiced by the arrival of Colonel Knox, with his long train of sledges drawn by oxen, bringing more than fifty cannon, mortars, and howitzers, besides supplies of lead, and flints. The zeal and perseverance which he had displayed in his wintry expedition across frozen lakes and snowy wastes, and the intelligence with which

he had fulfilled his instructions, won him the entire confidence of Washington. His conduct in this enterprise was but an earnest of that energy and ability which he displayed throughout the war.

Further ammunition being received from the royal arsenal at New York, and other quarters, and a reinforcement of ten regiments of militia, Washington no longer met with opposition to his warlike measures. Lechmere Point, which Putnam had fortified, was immediately to be supplied with mortars and heavy cannon, so as to command Boston on the north ; and Dorchester Heights, on the south of the town, were forthwith to be taken possession of. "If anything," said Washington, "will induce the enemy to hazard an engagement, it will be our attempting to fortify those heights, as, in that event taking place, we shall be able to command a great part of the town, and almost the whole harbor." Their possession, moreover, would enable him to push his works to Nook's Hill, and other points opposite Boston, whence a cannonade and bombardment must drive the enemy from the city.

The council of Massachusetts, at his request, ordered the militia of the towns contiguous to Dorchester and Roxbury, to hold themselves in readiness to repair to the lines at those places

with arms, ammunition, and accoutrements, on receiving a preconcerted signal.

Washington felt painfully aware how much depended upon the success of this attempt. There was a cloud of gloom and distrust lowering upon the public mind. Danger threatened on the north and on the south. Montgomery had fallen before the walls of Quebec. The army in Canada was shattered. Tryon and the tories were plotting mischief in New York. Dunmore was harassing the lower part of Virginia, and Clinton and his fleet were prowling along the coast, on a secret errand of mischief.

Washington's general orders evince the solemn and anxious state of his feelings. In those of the 26th of February, he forbade all playing at cards and other games of chance. "At this time of public distress," writes he, "men may find enough to do in the service of God and their country, without abandoning themselves to vice and immorality. . . . It is a noble cause we are engaged in; it is the cause of virtue and mankind; every advantage and comfort to us and our posterity depend upon the vigor of our exertions; in short, freedom or slavery must be the result of our conduct; there can, therefore, be no greater inducement to men to behave well. But it may not be amiss to the troops to know, that if any man in

action shall presume to skulk, hide himself, or retreat from the enemy without the orders of his commanding officer, he will be instantly shot down as an example of cowardice; cowards having too frequently disconcerted the best formed troops by their dastardly behavior."

In the general plan it was concerted that, should the enemy detach a large force to dislodge our men from Dorchester Heights, as had been done in the affair of Bunker's Hill, an attack upon the opposite side of the town should forthwith be made by General Putnam. For this purpose he was to have four thousand picked men in readiness, in two divisions, under Generals Sullivan and Greene. At a concerted signal from Roxbury, they were to embark in boats near the mouth of the Charles River, cross under cover of the fire of three floating batteries, land in two places in Boston, secure its strong posts, force the gates and works at the Neck, and let in the Roxbury troops.

Chapter III.

The Affair of Dorchester Heights—American and English Letters Respecting it—A Laborious Night—Revelations at Daybreak—Howe in a Perplexity—A Night Attack Meditated—Stormy Weather—The Town to be Evacuated—Negotiations and Arrangements—Preparations to Embark—Excesses of the Troops—Boston Evacuated—Speech of the Duke of Manchester on the Subject—A Medal Voted by Congress.

THE evening of Monday, the 4th of March, was fixed upon for the occupation of Dorchester Heights. The ground was frozen too hard to be easily intrenched; fascines, therefore, and gabions, and bundles of screwed hay, were collected during the two preceding nights, with which to form breastworks and redoubts. During these two busy nights the enemy's batteries were cannonaded and bombarded from opposite points, to occupy their attention, and prevent their noticing these preparations. They

replied with spirit, and the incessant roar of artillery thus kept up, covered completely the rumbling of wagons and ordnance.

How little the enemy were aware of what was impending, we may gather from the following extract of a letter from an officer of distinction in the British army in Boston to his friend in London, dated on the 3d of March :

" For these last six weeks or near two months we have been better amused than could possibly be expected in our situation. We had a theatre, we had balls, and there is actually a subscription on foot for a masquerade. England seems to have forgot us, and we have endeavored to forget ourselves. But we were roused to a sense of our situation last night, in a manner unpleasant enough. The rebels have been for some time past erecting a bomb battery, and last night began to play upon us. Two shells fell not far from me. One fell upon Colonel Monckton's house, but luckily did not burst until it had crossed the street. Many houses were damaged, but no lives lost. The rebel army," adds he, " is not brave, I believe, but it is agreed on all hands that their artillery officers are at least equal to ours." *

The wife of John Adams, who resided in

* *Am. Archives*, 4th Series, v., 425.

the vicinity of the American camp, and knew that a general action was meditated, expresses in a letter to her husband the feelings of a patriot woman during the suspense of these nights.

"I have been in a constant state of anxiety since you left me," writes she on Saturday. "It has been said to-morrow, and to-morrow for this month, and when the dreadful to-morrow will be, I know not. But hark! The house this instant shakes with the roar of cannon. I have been to the door, and find it is a cannonade from our army. Orders, I find, are come, for all the remaining militia to repair to the lines Monday night, by twelve o'clock. No sleep for me to-night."

On Sunday the letter is resumed. "I went to bed after twelve, but got no rest; the cannon continued firing, and my heart kept pace with them all night. We have had a pretty quiet day, but what to-morrow will bring forth, God only knows."

On Monday, the appointed evening, she continues: "I have just returned from Penn's Hill, where I have been sitting to hear the amazing roar of cannon, and from whence I could see every shell which was thrown. The sound, I think, is one of the grandest in nature, and is of the true species of the

sublime. 'T is now an incessant roar; but O, the fatal ideas which are connected with the sound! How many of our dear countrymen must fall!

"I went to bed about twelve, and arose again a little after one. I could no more sleep than if I had been in the engagement; the rattling of the windows, the jar of the house, the continual roar of twenty-four-pounders, and the bursting of shells, give us such ideas, and realize a scene to us of which we could scarcely form any conception. I hope to give you joy of Boston, even if it is in ruins, before I send this away."

On the Monday evening thus graphically described, as soon as the firing commenced, the detachment under General Thomas set out on its cautious and secret march from the lines of Roxbury and Dorchester. Everything was conducted as regularly and quietly as possible. A covering party of eight hundred men preceded the carts with the intrenching tools; then came General Thomas with the working party, twelve hundred strong, followed by a train of three hundred wagons, laden with fascines, gabions, and hay screwed into bundles of seven or eight hundred-weight. A great number of such bundles were ranged in a line along Dorchester Neck on the side

next the enemy, to protect the troops, while passing, from being raked by the fire of the enemy. Fortunately, although the moon, as Washington writes, was shining in its full lustre, the flash and roar of cannonry from opposite points, and the bursting of bomb-shells high in the air, so engaged and diverted the attention of the enemy, that the detachment reached the heights about eight o'clock, without being heard or perceived. The covering party then divided; one half proceeded to the point nearest Boston, the other to the one nearest to Castle Williams. The working party commenced to fortify, under the directions of Gridley, the veteran engineer, who had planned the works on Bunker's Hill. It was severe labor, for the earth was frozen eighteen inches deep; but the men worked with more than their usual spirit, for the eye of the commander-in-chief was upon them. Though not called there by his duties, Washington could not be absent from this eventful operation. An eloquent orator has imagined his situation,—"All around him intense movement; while nothing was to be heard excepting the tread of busy feet and the dull sound of the mattock upon the frozen soil. Beneath him the slumbering batteries of the castle; the roadsteads and harbor filled with the vessels of

the royal fleet, motionless, except as they swung round at their moorings at the turn of the midnight tide; the beleaguered city occupied with a powerful army, and a considerable non-combatant population, startled into unnatural vigilance by the incessant and destructive cannonade, yet unobservant of the great operations in progress so near them; the surrounding country, dotted with a hundred rural settlements, roused from the deep sleep of a New England village, by the unwonted glare and tumult." *

The same plastic fancy suggests the crowd of visions, phantoms of the past, which may have passed through Washington's mind, on this night of feverish excitement. "His early training in the wilderness; his escape from drowning, and the deadly rifle of the savage in the perilous mission to Venango; the shower of iron hail through which he rode unharmed on Braddock's field; the early stages of the great conflict now brought to its crisis, and, still more solemnly, the possibilities of the future for himself and for America—the ruin of the patriot cause if he failed at the outset; the triumphant consolidation of the Revolution if he prevailed."

* Oration of the Hon. Edward Everett at Dorchester, July 4, 1855.

The labors of the night were carried on by the Americans with their usual activity and address. When a relief party arrived at four o'clock in the morning, two forts were in sufficient forwardness to furnish protection against small-arms and grapeshot; and such use was made of the fascines and bundles of screwed hay, that, at dawn, a formidable-looking fortress frowned along the height. We have the testimony of a British officer already quoted, for the fact. "This morning at daybreak we discovered two redoubts on Dorchester Point, and two smaller ones on their flanks. They were all raised during the last night, with an expedition equal to that of the genii belonging to Aladdin's wonderful lamp. From these hills they command the whole town, so that we must drive them from their post, or desert the place."

Howe gazed at the mushroom fortress with astonishment, as it loomed indistinctly, but grandly, through a morning fog. "The rebels," exclaimed he, "have done more work in one night, than my whole army would have done in one month."

Washington had watched, with intense anxiety, the effect of the revelation at daybreak. "When the enemy first discovered our works in the morning," writes he, "they

seemed to be in great confusion, and from their movements, to intend an attack."

An American, who was on Dorchester Heights, gives a picture of the scene. A tremendous cannonade was commenced from the forts in Boston, and the shipping in the harbor. "Cannon shot," writes he, "are continually rolling and rebounding over the hill, and it is astonishing to observe how little our soldiers are terrified by them. The royal troops are perceived to be in motion, as if embarking to pass the harbor and land on Dorchester shore, to attack our works. The hills and elevations in this vicinity are covered with spectators, to witness deeds of horror in the expected conflict. His Excellency, General Washington, is present, animating and encouraging the soldiers, and they in return manifest their joy, and express a warm desire for the approach of the enemy; each man knows his own place. Our breastworks are strengthened, and among the means of defense are a great number of barrels, filled with stones and sand, and arranged in front of our works, which are to be put in motion, and made to roll down the hill, to break the legs of the assailants as they advance."

General Thomas was reinforced with two thousand men. Old Putnam stood ready to

make a descent upon the north side of the town, with his four thousand picked men, as soon as the heights on the south should be assailed: "All the forenoon," says the American above cited, "we were in momentary expectation of witnessing an awful scene; nothing less than the carnage of Breed's Hill battle was expected."

As Washington rode about the heights, he reminded the troops that it was the 5th of March, the anniversary of the Boston massacre, and called on them to revenge the slaughter of their brethren. They answered him with shouts. "Our officers and men," writes he, "appeared impatient for the appeal. The event, I think, must have been fortunate; nothing less than success and victory on our side."

Howe, in the meantime, was perplexed between his pride and the hazards of his position. In his letters to the ministry, he had scouted the idea of "being in danger from the rebels." He had "hoped they would attack him." Apparently they were about to fulfil his hopes, and with formidable advantages of position. He must dislodge them from Dorchester Heights, or evacuate Boston. The latter was an alterative too mortifying to be readily adopted. He resolved on an attack, but it was to be a night one.

"A body of light infantry, under the command of Major Mulgrave, and a body of grenadiers, are to embark to-night at seven," writes the gay British officer already quoted. "I think it likely to be a general affair. Adieu balls, masquerades, etc., for this may be looked upon as the opening of the campaign."

In the evening the British began to move. Lord Percy was to lead the attack. Twenty-five hundred men were embarked in transports, which were to convey them to the rendezvous at Castle Williams. A violent storm set in from the east. The transports could not reach their place of destination. The men-of-war could not cover and support them. A furious surf beat on the shore where the boats would have to land. The attack was consequently postponed until the following day.

That day was equally unpropitious. The storm continued, with torrents of rain. The attack was again postponed. In the meantime, the Americans went on strengthening their works; by the time the storm subsided, General Howe deemed them too strong to be easily carried; the attempt, therefore, was relinquished altogether.

What was to be done? The shells thrown from the heights into the town, proved that it was no longer tenable. The fleet was equally

exposed. Admiral Shuldham, the successor to Graves, assured Howe that if the Americans maintained possession of the heights, his ships could not remain in the harbor. It was determined, therefore, in a council of war, to evacuate the place as soon as possible. But now came on a humiliating perplexity. The troops, in embarking, would be exposed to a destructive fire. How was this to be prevented? General Howe's pride would not suffer him to make capitulations; he endeavored to work on the fears of the Bostonians, by hinting that if his troops were molested while embarking, he might be obliged to cover their retreat by setting fire to the town.

The hint had its effect. Several of the principal inhabitants communicated with him through the medium of General Robertson. The result of the negotiation was, that a paper was concocted and signed by several of the "selectmen" of Boston, stating the fears they had entertained of the destruction of the place, but that those fears had been quieted by General Howe's declaration that it should remain uninjured, provided his troops were unmolested while embarking; the selectmen, therefore, begged "some assurance that so dreadful a calamity might not be brought on by any measures from without."

This paper was sent out from Boston, on the evening of the 8th, with a flag of truce, which bore it to the American lines at Roxbury. There it was received by Colonel Learned, and carried by him to headquarters. Washington consulted with such of the general officers as he could immediately assemble. The paper was not addressed to him, nor to any one else. It was not authenticated by the signature of General Howe; nor was there any other act obliging that commander to fulfil the promise asserted to have been made by him. It was deemed proper, therefore, that Washington should give no answer to the paper; but that Colonel Learned should signify, in a letter, his having laid it before the commander-in-chief, and the reasons assigned for not answering it.

With this uncompromising letter, the flag returned to Boston. The Americans suspended their fire, but continued to fortify their positions. On the night of the 9th, a detachment was sent to plant a battery on Nook's Hill, an eminence at Dorchester, which lies nearest to Boston Neck. A fire kindled behind the hill revealed the project. It provoked a cannonade from the British, which was returned with interest from Cobble Hill, Lechmere Point, Cambridge, and Roxbury. The roar of cannonry and bursting of bombshells prevailed from

half after eight at night until six in the morning. It was another night of terror to the people of Boston; but the Americans had to desist, for the present, from the attempt to fortify Nook's Hill. Among the accidents of the bombardment, was the bursting of Putnam's vaunted mortar, "The Congress."

Daily preparations were now made by the enemy for departure. By proclamation, the inhabitants were ordered to deliver up all linen and woollen goods, and all other goods, that, in possession of the rebels, would aid them in carrying on the war. Crean Bush, a New York tory, was authorized to take possession of such goods, and put them on board of two of the transports. Under cover of his commission, he and his myrmidons broke open stores, and stripped them of their contents. Marauding gangs from the fleet and army followed their example, and extended their depredations to private houses. On the 14th, Howe, in a general order, declared that the first soldier caught plundering should be hanged on the spot. Still, on the 16th, houses were broken open, goods destroyed, and furniture defaced by the troops. Some of the furniture, it is true, belonged to the officers, and was destroyed because they could neither sell it nor carry it away.

The letter of a British officer gives a lively picture of the hurried preparations for retreat. "Our not being burdened with provisions, permitted us to save some stores and ammunition, the light field-pieces, and such things as were most convenient of carriage. The rest, I am sorry to say, we were obliged to leave behind; such of the guns as by dismounting we could throw into the sea was so done. The carriages were disabled, and every precaution taken that our circumstances would permit; for our retreat was by agreement. The people of the town who were friends to government, took care of nothing but their merchandise, and found means to employ the men belonging to the transports in embarking their goods, so that several of the vessels were entirely filled with private property, instead of the king's stores. By some unavoidable accident, the medicines, surgeons' chests, instruments, and necessaries, were left in the hospital. The confusion unavoidable to such a disaster will make you conceive how much must be forgot, where every man had a private concern. The necessary care and distress of the women, children, sick, and wounded, required every assistance that could be given. It was not like breaking up a camp, where every man knows his duty; it was like departing your country with your wives, your

servants, your household furniture, and all your encumbrances. The officers, who felt the disgrace of their retreat, did their utmost to keep up appearances. The men, who thought they were changing for the better, strove to take advantage of the present times, and were kept from plunder and drink with difficulty." *

For some days the embarkation of the troops was delayed by adverse winds. Washington, who was imperfectly informed of affairs in Boston, feared that the movements there might be a feint. Determined to bring things to a crisis, he detached a force to Nook's Hill on Saturday, the sixteenth, which threw up a breastwork in the night regardless of the cannonading of the enemy. This commanded Boston Neck, and the south part of the town, and a deserter brought a false report to the British that a general assault was intended.

The embarkation, so long delayed, began with hurry and confusion at four o'clock in the morning. The harbor of Boston soon presented a striking and tumultuous scene. There were seventy-eight ships and transports casting loose for sea, and eleven or twelve thousand men, soldiers, sailors, and refugees, hurrying to embark ; many, especially of the latter, with their families and personal effects. The refu-

* *Remembrancer*, vol. iii., p. 108.

gees, in fact, labored under greater disadvantages than the king's troops, being obliged to man their own vessels, as sufficient seaman could not be spared from the king's transports. Speaking of those "who had taken upon themselves the style and title of government men" in Boston, and acted an unfriendly part in this great contest, Washington observes: "By all accounts there never existed a more miserable set of beings than these wretched creatures now are. Taught to believe that the power of Great Britain was superior to all opposition, and that foreign aid, if not, was at hand, they were even higher and more insulting in their opposition than the Regulars. When the order issued, therefore, for embarking the troops in Boston, no electric shock,—no sudden clap of thunder,—in a word the last trump could not have struck them with greater consternation. They were at their wits' ends, and conscious of their black ingratitude, chose to commit themselves in the manner I have above described, to the mercy of the waves at a tempestuous season, rather than meet their offended countrymen." *

While this tumultuous embarkation was going on, the Americans looked on in silence from

* Letter to John A. Washington, *Am. Archives*, 4th Series, v., 560.

their batteries on Dorchester Heights, without firing a shot. "It was lucky for the inhabitants now left in Boston, that they did not," writes a British officer; "for I am informed everything was prepared to set the town in a blaze, had they fired one cannon." *

At an early hour of the morning, the troops stationed at Cambridge and Roxbury had paraded, and several regiments under Putnam had embarked in boats, and dropped down Charles River, to Sewall's Point, to watch the movements of the enemy by land and water. About nine o'clock a large body of troops was seen marching down Bunker's Hill, while boats full of soldiers were putting off for the shipping. Two scouts were sent from the camp to reconnoiter. The works appeared still to be occupied, for sentries were posted about them with shouldered muskets. Observing them to be motionless, the scouts made nearer scrutiny, and discovered them to be mere effigies, set up to delay the advance of the Americans. Pushing on, they found the works deserted, and gave signal of the fact; whereupon a detachment was sent from the camp to take possession.

Part of Putnam's troops were now sent back to Cambridge; a part were ordered forward to

* Frothingham, *Siege of Boston*, p. 310.

occupy Boston. General Ward, too, with five hundred men, made his way from Roxbury, across the Neck, about which the enemy had scattered caltrops or crow's feet,* to impede invasion. The gates were unbarred and thrown open, and the Americans entered in triumph, with drums beating and colors flying.

By ten o'clock the enemy were all embarked and under way; Putnam had taken command of the city, and occupied the important points, and the flag of thirteen stripes, the standard of the Union, floated above all the forts.

On the following day, Washington himself entered the town, where he was joyfully welcomed. He beheld around him sad traces of the devastation caused by the bombardment, though not to the extent that he had apprehended. There were evidences, also, of the haste with which the British had retreated—five pieces of ordnance with their trunnions knocked off; others hastily spiked; others thrown off the wharf. "General Howe's retreat," writes Washington, "was precipitate beyond anything I could have conceived. The destruction of the stores at Dunbar's camp, after Braddock's defeat, was but a faint image of what may be seen at Boston; artillery carts

* Iron balls, with four sharp points, to wound the feet of men or horses.

cut to pieces in one place, gun carriages in another; shells broke here, shots buried there, and everything carrying with it the face of disorder and confusion, as also of distress." *

To add to the mortification of General Howe, he received, we are told, while sailing out of the harbor, despatches from the ministry, approving the resolutions he had so strenuously expressed of maintaining his post until he should receive reinforcements.

As the small-pox prevailed in some parts of the town, precautions were taken by Washington for its purification; and the main body of the army did not march in until the 20th. "The joy manifested in the countenances of the inhabitants," says an observer, "was overcast by the melancholy gloom caused by ten tedious months of siege"; but when, on the 22d, the people from the country crowded into the town, "it was truly interesting," writes the same observer, "to witness the tender interviews and fond embraces of those who had been long separated under circumstances so peculiarly distressing." †

Notwithstanding the haste with which the British army was embarked, the fleet lingered for some days in Nantasket Road. Apprehen-

* Lee's *Memoirs*, p. 162.

† Thatcher's *Mil. Journal*, p. 50.

sive that the enemy, now that their forces were collected in one body, might attempt by some blow to retrieve their late disgrace, Washington hastily threw up works on Fort Hill, which commanded the harbor, and demolished those which protected the town from the neighboring country. The fleet at length disappeared entirely from the coast, and the deliverance of Boston was assured.

The eminent services of Washington throughout this arduous siege, his admirable management, by which, "in the course of a few months, *an undisciplined band of husbandmen* became soldiers, and were enabled to invest, for nearly a year, and finally to expel a brave army of veterans commanded by the most experienced generals," drew forth the enthusiastic applause of the nation. No higher illustration of this great achievement need be given than the summary of it contained in the speech of a British statesman, the Duke of Manchester, in the House of Lords. "The army of Britain," said he, "equipped with every possible essential of war; a chosen army, with chosen officers, backed by the power of a mighty fleet, sent to correct revolted subjects; sent to chastise a resisting city; sent to assert Britain's authority,—has, for many tedious months, been imprisoned within that town by the pro-

vincial army; who, their watchful guards, permitted them no inlet to the country; who braved all their efforts, and defied all their skill and ability in war could ever attempt. One way, indeed, of escape was left; the fleet is yet respected; to the fleet the army has recourse; and British generals, whose name never met with a blot of dishonor, are forced to quit that town which was the first object of the war, the immediate cause of hostilities, the place of arms, which has cost this nation more than a million to defend."

We close this eventful chapter of Washington's history, with the honor decreed to him by the highest authority of his country. On motion of John Adams, who had first moved his nomination as commander-in-chief, a unanimous vote of thanks to him was passed in Congress; and it was ordered that a gold medal be struck, commemorating the evacuation of Boston, bearing the effigy of Washington as its deliverer.

Chapter IV.

Destination of the Fleet—Commission of the Two Howes—Character of Lord Howe—The Colonies Divided into Departments—Lee Assigned to the Southern Department—General Thomas to Canada—Character of Lee, by Washington—Letters of Lee from the South—A Dog in a Dancing-School—Committee of Safety in Virginia—Lee's Grenadiers—Putnam in Command at New York—State of Affairs there—Arrival of Washington—New Arrangements—Perplexities with Respect to Canada—England Subsidizes Hessian Troops.

THE British fleet bearing the army from Boston, had disappeared from the coast. "Whither they are bound, and where they next will pitch their tents," writes Washington, "I know not." He conjectured their destination to be New York, and made his arrangements accordingly; but he was mistaken. General Howe had steered for Halifax, there to await the arrival of strong reinforcements from England, and the fleet of his brother,

Admiral Lord Howe, who was to be commander-in-chief of the naval forces on the North American station.

It was thought these brothers would co-operate admirably in the exercise of their relative functions on land and water. Yet they were widely different in their habits and dispositions. Sir William, easy, indolent, and self-indulgent, "hated business," we are told, "and never did any. Lord Howe loved it, dwelt upon it, never could leave it." Beside his nautical commands, he had been treasurer of the navy, member of the board of admiralty, and had held a seat in Parliament; where, according to Walpole, he was "silent as a rock," excepting when naval affairs were under discussion; when he spoke briefly and to the point. "My Lord Howe," said George II., "your life has been a continued series of services to your country." He was now about fifty-one years of age, tall and well proportioned like his brother; but wanting his ease of deportment. His complexion was dark, his countenance grave and strongly marked, and he had a shy reserve, occasionally mistaken for haughtiness. As a naval officer, he was esteemed resolute and enterprising, yet cool and firm. In his younger days he had contracted a friendship for Wolfe; "it was like the union of cannon and gunpow-

der," said Walpole. Howe, strong in mind, solid in judgment, firm of purpose, was said to be the cannon; Wolfe, quick in conception, prompt in execution, impetuous in action, the gunpowder.* The bravest man, we are told, could not wish for a more able or more gallant commander than Howe, and the sailors used to say of him, "Give us Black Dick, and we fear nothing."

Such is his lordship's portrait as sketched by English pencils; we shall see hereafter how far his conduct conforms to it. At present we must consider the state of the American army, in the appointments and commands of which various changes had recently taken place.

It was presumed the enemy in the ensuing campaign would direct their operations against the Middle and Southern colonies. Congress divided those colonies into two departments; one comprehending New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Maryland, was to be under the command of a major-general and two brigadier-generals; the other, comprising Virginia, the Carolinas, and Georgia, to be under the command of a major-general and four brigadiers.

In this new arrangement, the orders destining General Lee to Canada were superseded,

* Barrows, *Life of Earl Howe*, p. 400.

and he was appointed to the command of the Southern department, where he was to keep watch upon the movements of Sir Henry Clinton. He was somewhat dissatisfied with the change in his destination. "As I am the only general officer on the continent," writes he to Washington, "who can speak or think in French, I confess I think it would have been more prudent to have sent me to Canada; but I shall obey with alacrity, and I hope with success."

In reply, Washington observes, "I was just about to congratulate you on your appointment to the command in Canada, when I received the account that your destination was altered. As a Virginian, I must rejoice at the change, but as an American, I think you would have done more essential service to the common cause in Canada. For, beside the advantage of speaking and thinking in French, an officer who is acquainted with their manners and customs, and has travelled in their country, must certainly take the strongest hold of their affection and confidence.

The command in Canada was given to General Thomas, who had distinguished himself at Roxbury, and was promoted to the rank of major-general. It would have been given to Schuyler, but for the infirm state of his health; still Congress expressed a reliance on his efforts

to complete the work "so conspicuously begun and well conducted" under his orders, in the last campaign; and, as not merely the success but the very existence of the army in Canada would depend on supplies sent from these colonies across the lakes, he was required, until further orders, to fix his headquarters at Albany, where, without being exposed to the fatigue of the camp until his health was perfectly restored, he would be in a situation to forward supplies; to superintend the operations necessary for the defense of New York and the Hudson River, and the affairs of the whole middle department.

Lee set out for the South on the 7th of March, carrying with him his bold spirit, his shrewd sagacity, and his whimsical and splenetic humors. The following admirably impartial sketch is given of him by Washington, in a letter to his brother Augustine: "He is the first in military knowledge and experience we have in the whole army. He is zealously attached to the cause; honest and well meaning, but rather fickle and violent, I fear, in his temper. However, as he possesses an uncommon share of good sense and spirit, I congratulate my countrymen on his appointment to that department." *

* Force's *Am. Archives*, 4th Series, v., 562.

We give by anticipation a few passages from Lee's letters, illustrative of his character and career. The news of the evacuation of Boston reached him in Virginia. In a letter to Washington, dated Williamsburg, April 5th, he expresses himself on the subject with generous warmth. "My dear general," writes he, "I most sincerely congratulate you; I congratulate the public on the great and glorious event, your possession of Boston. It will be a most bright page in the annals of America, and a most abominable black one in those of the beldam Britain. Go on, my dear general; crown yourself with glory, and establish the liberties and lustre of your country on a foundation more permanent than the Capitol rock."

Then reverting to himself, his subacid humors work up, and he shows that he had been as much annoyed in Williamsburg, by the interference of committees, as he had been in New York. "My situation," writes he, "is just as I expected. I am afraid I shall make a shabby figure, without any real demerits of my own. I am like a dog in a dancing-school; I know not where to turn myself, where to fix myself. The circumstances of the country, intersected with navigable rivers; the uncertainty of the enemy's designs and motions, who can fly in an instant to any spot they choose, with

their canvas wings, throw me, or would throw Julius Cæsar, into this inevitable dilemma; I may possibly be in the North, when, as Richard says, I should serve my sovereign in the West. I can only act from surmise, and have a very good chance of surmising wrong. I am sorry to grate your ears with a truth, but must, at all events, assure you, that the Provincial Congress of New York are angels of decision, when compared with your countrymen, the committee of safety assembled at Williamsburg. Page, Lee, Mercer, and Payne, are, indeed, exceptions; but from Pendleton, Bland, the Treasurer, and Co.—*Libera nos domine!*"

Lee's letters from Virginia written at a later date, were in a better humor. "There is a noble spirit in this province pervading all orders of men; if the same becomes universal, we shall be saved. I am, fortunately for my own happiness, and, I think, for the well-being of the community, on the best terms with the senatorial part, as well as the people at large. I shall endeavor to preserve their confidence and good opinion." *

And in a letter to Washington:

"I have formed two companies of grenadiers to each regiment, and with spears thirteen feet long. Their rifles (for they are all riflemen)

* Force's *Am. Archives*, 4th Series, v., 792.

slung over their shoulders, their appearance is formidable, and the men are conciliated to the weapon. . . . I am likewise furnishing myself with four-ounced rifled amusettes, which will carry an infernal distance; the two-ounced hit a half sheet of paper at five hundred yards distance."

On Lee's departure for the South, Brigadier-General Lord Stirling had remained in temporary command at New York. Washington, however, presuming that the British fleet had steered for that port, with the force which had evacuated Boston, hastened detachments thither under Generals Heath and Sullivan, and wrote for three thousand additional men to be furnished by Connecticut. The command of the whole he gave to General Putnam, who was ordered to fortify the city and the passes of the Hudson, according to the plans of General Lee. In the meantime, Washington delayed to come on himself, until he should have pushed forward the main body of his army by divisions.

Lee's anticipations that laxity and confusion would prevail after his departure, were not realized. The veteran Putnam, on taking command, put the city under rigorous military rule. The soldiers were to retire to their barracks and quarters at the beating of the tattoo, and remain there until the reveille in the morning.

The inhabitants were subjected to the same rule. None would be permitted to pass a sentry, without the countersign, which would be furnished to them on applying to any of the brigade majors. All communication between the "ministerial fleet" and shore was stopped; the ships were no longer to be furnished with provisions. Any person taken in the act of holding communication with them would be considered an enemy, and treated accordingly.

We have a lively picture of the state of the city, in letters written at the time, and already cited. "When you are informed that New York is deserted by its old inhabitants, and filled with soldiers from New England, Philadelphia, Jersey, etc., you will naturally conclude the environs of it are not very safe from so undisciplined a multitude as our provincials are represented to be; but I do believe there are very few instances of so great a number of men together, with so little mischief done by them. They have all the simplicity of ploughmen in their manners, and seem quite strangers to the vices of older soldiers: they have been employed in creating fortifications in every part of the town. . . . Governor Tryon loses his credit with the people here prodigiously; he has lately issued a proclamation, desiring the deluded people of this colony to return to

their obedience, promising a speedy support to the friends of government, declaring a door of mercy open to the penitent, and a rod for the disobedient, etc. The friends of government were provoked at being so distinguished, and the friends to liberty hung him in effigy, and printed a dying speech for him. A letter, too, was intercepted from him, hastening Lord Howe to New York, as the rebels were fortifying. These have entirely lost him the goodwill of the people. . . . You cannot think how sorry I am the governor has so lost himself, a man once so much beloved. O Lucifer, once the son of morn, how fallen! General Washington is expected hourly; General Putnam is here, with several other generals, and some of their ladies. . . . The variety of reports keeps one's mind always in agitation. Clinton and Howe have set the continent a racing from Boston to Carolina. Clinton came into our harbor: away flew the women, children, goods, and chattels, and in came the soldiers flocking from every part. No sooner was it known that he was not going to land here, than expresses were sent to Virginia and Carolina, to put them on their guard; his next expedition was to Virginia; there they were ready to receive him; from thence, without attempting to land, he sailed to Carolina.

Now General Howe is leading us another dance." *

Washington came on by the way of Providence, Norwich, and New London, expediting the embarkation of troops from these posts, and arrived at New York on the 13th of April. Many of the works which Lee had commenced were by this time finished; others were in progress. It was apprehended the principal operations of the enemy would be on Long Island, the high grounds of which, in the neighborhood of Brooklyn, commanded the city. Washington saw that an able and efficient officer was needed at that place. Greene was accordingly stationed there, with a division of the army. He immediately proceeded to complete the fortifications of that important post, and to make himself acquainted with the topography and defensive points of the surrounding country.

The aggregate force distributed at several extensive posts in New York and its environs, and on Long Island, Staten Island, and elsewhere, amounted to little more than ten thousand men; some of those were on the sick list, others absent on command, or on furlough; there were but about eight thousand available and fit for duty. These, too, were without pay;

* *Remembrancer*, vol. iii., p. 85.

those recently enlisted, without arms, and no one could say where arms were to be procured.

Washington saw the inadequacy of the force to the purposes required, and was full of solicitude about the security of a place, the central point of the Confederacy, and the grand deposit of ordnance and military stores. He was aware, too, of the disaffection to the cause among many of the inhabitants, and apprehensive of treachery. The process of fortifying the place had induced the ships of war to fall down into the outer bay, within the Hook, upwards of twenty miles from the city; but Governor Tryon was still on board of one of them, keeping up an active correspondence with the tories on Staten and Long Islands, and in other parts of the neighborhood.

Washington took an early occasion to address an urgent letter to the committee of safety, pointing out the dangerous and even treasonable nature of this correspondence. He had more weight and influence with that body than had been possessed by General Lee, and procured the passage of a resolution prohibiting, under severe penalties, all intercourse with the king's ships.

Headquarters, at this time, was a scene of incessant toil on the part of the commander-in-chief, his secretaries and aides-de-camp. "I

give in to no kind of amusements myself," writes he, "and consequently those about me can have none, but are confined from morning until evening, hearing and answering applications and letters." The presence of Mrs. Washington was a solace in the midst of these stern military cares, and diffused a feminine grace and decorum, and a cheerful spirit over the domestic arrangements of headquarters, where everything was conducted with simplicity and dignity. The wives of some of the other generals and officers rallied around Mrs. Washington, but social intercourse was generally at an end. "We all live here," writes a lady of New York, "like nuns shut up in a nunnery. No society with the town, for there are none there to visit; neither can we go in or out after a certain hour without the countersign."

In addition to his cares about the security of New York, Washington had to provide for the perilous exigencies of the army in Canada. Since his arrival in the city, four regiments of troops, a company of riflemen, and another of artificers had been detached under the command of Brigadier-General Thompson, and a further corps of six regiments under Brigadier-General Sullivan, with orders to join General Thomas as soon as possible.

Still Congress inquired of him, whether further reinforcements to the army in Canada would not be necessary, and whether they could be spared from the army in New York. His reply shows the peculiar perplexities of his situation, and the tormenting uncertainty in which he was kept, as to where the next storm of war would break. "With respect to sending more troops to that country, I am really at a loss what to advise, as it is impossible, at present, to know the designs of the enemy. Should they send the whole force under General Howe up the river St. Lawrence, to relieve Quebec and recover Canada, the troops gone and now going, will be insufficient to stop their progress; and, should they think proper to send that, or an equal force, this way from Great Britain, for the purpose of possessing this city and securing the navigation of Hudson's River, the troops left here will not be sufficient to oppose them; and yet, for anything we know, I think it not improbable they may attempt both; both being of the greatest importance to them, if they have men. I could wish, indeed, that the army in Canada should be more powerfully reinforced; at the same time, I am conscious that the trusting of this important post, which is now become the grand magazine of America, to the handful of

men remaining here, is running too great a risk. The securing of this post and Hudson's River is to us also of so great importance, that I cannot, at present, advise the sending any more troops from hence; on the contrary, the general officers now here, whom I thought it my duty to consult, think it absolutely necessary to increase the army at this place with at least ten thousand men; especially when it is considered that from this place only the army in Canada must draw its supplies of ammunition, provisions, and most probably of men."

Washington at that time was not aware of the extraordinary expedients England had recently resorted to, against the next campaign. The Duke of Brunswick, the Landgrave of Hesse Cassel, and the Hereditary Prince of Cassel, Count of Hanau, had been subsidized to furnish troops to assist in the subjugation of her colonies. Four thousand three hundred Brunswick troops, and nearly thirteen thousand Hessians, had entered the British service. Besides the subsidy exacted by the German princes, they were to be paid seven pounds four shillings and four pence sterling for every soldier furnished by them, and as much more for every one slain.

Of this notable arrangement, Washington, as we observed, was not yet aware. "The

designs of the enemy," writes he, "are too much behind the curtain for me to form any accurate opinion of their plan of operations for the summer's campaign. We are left to wander, therefore, in the field of conjecture." *

Within a few days afterwards, he had vague accounts of "Hessians and Hanoverian troops coming over"; but it was not until the 17th of May, when he received letters from General Schuyler, inclosing others from the commanders in Canada, that he knew in what direction some of these bolts of war were launched; and this calls for some further particulars of the campaign on the banks of the St. Lawrence; which we shall give to the reader in the ensuing chapter.

* Letter to the President of Congress, 5th May.

Chapter V.

Arnold Blockades Quebec—His Difficulties—Arrival of General Wooster—Of General Thomas—Abortive Attempt on Quebec — Preparations for Retreat — Sortie of Carleton—Retreat of the Americans—Halt at Point Deschambault—Alarm in the Colonies at the Retreat of the Army—Popular Clamor against Schuyler—Slanders Refuted.

IN a former chapter, we left Arnold before the walls of Quebec, wounded, crippled, almost disabled, yet not disheartened; blockading that "proud town" with a force inferior, by half, in number to that of the garrison. For his gallant services, Congress promoted him in January to the rank of brigadier-general.

Throughout the winter he kept up the blockade with his shattered army; though had Carleton ventured upon a sortie, he might have been forced to decamp. That cautious general, however, remained within his walls.

He was sure of reinforcements from England in the spring, and, in the meantime, trusted to the elements of dissolution at work in the besieging army.

Arnold, in truth, had difficulties of all kinds to contend with. His military chest was exhausted; his troops were in want of necessaries; to procure supplies, he was compelled to resort to the paper money issued by Congress, which was uncurrent among the Canadians; he issued a proclamation making the refusal to take it in payment a penal offense. This only produced irritation and disgust. As the terms of their enlistment expired, his men claimed their discharge and returned home. Sickness also thinned his ranks; so that, at one time, his force was reduced to five hundred men, and for two months, with all his recruitments of raw militia, did not exceed seven hundred.

The failure of the attack on Quebec had weakened the cause among the Canadians; the peasantry had been displeased by the conduct of the American troops; they had once welcomed them as deliverers; they now began to regard them as intruders. The seigneurs, or noblesse, also, feared to give further countenance to an invasion, which, if defeated, might involve them in ruin.

Notwithstanding all these discouragements, Arnold still kept up a bold face; cut off supplies occasionally, and harassed the place with alarms. Having repaired his batteries, he opened a fire upon the town, but with little effect; the best part of the artillerists, with Lamb, their capable commander, were prisoners within the walls.

On the 1st day of April, General Wooster arrived from Montreal, with reinforcements, and took the command. The day after his arrival, Arnold, by the falling of his horse, again received an injury on the leg recently wounded, and was disabled for upwards of a week. Considering himself slighted by General Wooster, who did not consult him in military affairs, he obtained leave of absence until he should be recovered from his lameness, and repaired to Montreal, where he took command.

General Thomas arrived at the camp in the course of April, and found the army in a forlorn condition, scattered at different posts, and on the island of Orleans. It was numerically increased to upwards of two thousand men, but several hundred were unfit for service. The small-pox had made great ravages. They had inoculated each other. In their sick and debilitated state, they were without barracks, and almost without medicine. A portion,

whose term of enlistment had expired, refused to do duty, and clamored for their discharge.

The winter was over, the river was breaking up, reinforcements to the garrison might immediately be expected, and then the case would be desperate. Observing that the river about Quebec was clear of ice, General Thomas determined on a bold effort. It was to send up a fire-ship with the flood, and while the ships in the harbor were in flames, and the town in confusion, to scale the walls.

Accordingly, on the 3d of May, the troops turned out with scaling ladders; the first-ship came up the river under easy sail, and arrived near the shipping before it was discovered. It was fired into. The crew applied a slow match to the train and pulled off. The ship was soon in a blaze, but the flames caught and consumed the sails; her way was checked, and she drifted off harmlessly with the ebbing tide. The rest of the plan was, of course, abandoned.

Nothing now remained but to retreat before the enemy should be reinforced. Preparations were made, in all haste, to embark the sick and the military stores. While this was taking place, five ships made their way into the harbor, on the 6th of May, and began to land troops. Thus reinforced, General Carleton

sallied forth, with eight hundred or a thousand men. We quote his own letter for an account of his sortie. "As soon as part of the 29th regiment with the marines, in all about two hundred, were landed, they, with the greatest part of the garrison, by this time much improved, and in high spirits, marched out of the ports of St. Louis and St. John's, to see what these mighty boasters were about. They were found very busy in their preparations for a retreat. A few shots being exchanged, the line marched forward, and the place was soon cleared of these plunderers."

By his own account, however, these "mighty boasters" had held him and his garrison closely invested for five months; had burnt the suburbs, battered the walls, thrown red-hot shot among the shipping, made repeated and daring attempts to carry the place by assault and stratagem, and rendered it necessary for soldiers, sailors, marines, and even judges and other civil officers to mount guard.* One officer declares, in a letter, that for eighty successive nights he slept in his clothes, to be ready in case of alarm.

All this, too, was effected by a handful of men, exposed in open encampments to the rigors of a Canadian winter. If in truth they

* Carleton to Lord George Germaine, May 14th.

were boasters, it must be allowed their deeds were equal to their words.

The Americans were in no condition to withstand Carleton's unlooked-for attack. They had no intrenchments, and could not muster three hundred men at any point. A precipitate retreat was the consequence, in which baggage, artillery, everything was abandoned. Even the sick were left behind; many of whom crawled away from the camp hospitals, and took refuge in the woods, or among the Canadian peasantry.

General Carleton did not think it prudent to engage in a pursuit with his newly-landed troops. He treated the prisoners with great humanity, and caused the sick to be sought out in their hiding-places, and brought to the general hospitals, with assurances that, when healed, they should have liberty to return to their homes.

General Thomas came to a halt at Point Deschambault, about sixty miles above Quebec, and called a council of war to consider what was to be done. The enemy's ships were hastening up the St. Lawrence; some were already but two or three leagues' distance. The camp was without cannon; powder, forwarded by General Schuyler, had fallen into the enemy's hands; there were not provisions enough to subsist the army for more than two or three

days; the men-of-war, too, might run up the river, intercept all their resources, and reduce them to the same extremity they had experienced before Quebec. It was resolved, therefore, to ascend the river still farther.

General Thomas, however, determined to send forward the invalids, but to remain at Point Deschambault with about five hundred men, until he should receive orders from Montreal, and learn whether such supplies could be forwarded immediately as would enable him to defend his position.*

The despatches of General Thomas, setting forth the disastrous state of affairs, had a disheartening effect on Schuyler, who feared the army would be obliged to abandon Canada. Washington, on the contrary, spoke cheeringly on the subject. "We must not despair. A manly and spirited opposition only can insure success, and prevent the enemy from improving the advantage they have obtained." †

He regretted that the troops had not been able to make a stand at Point Deschambault, but hoped they would maintain a post as far down the river as possible. The lower it was, the more important would be the advantages resulting from it, as all the country above

* General Thomas to Washington, May 8th.

† Washington to Schuyler, May 17th.

would be favorable, and furnish assistance and support; while all below would necessarily be in the power of the enemy.

The tidings of the reverses in Canada and the retreat of the American army, had spread consternation throughout the New Hampshire Grants, and the New England frontiers, which would now be laid open to invasion. Committees of towns and districts assembled in various places, to consult on the alarming state of affairs. In a time of adversity, it relieves the public mind to have some individual on whom to charge its disasters. General Schuyler, at present, was to be the victim. We have already noticed the prejudice and ill-will, on the part of the New England people, which had harassed him throughout the campaign, and nearly driven him from the service. His enemies now stigmatized him as the cause of the late reverses. He had neglected, they said, to forward reinforcements and supplies to the army in Canada. His magnanimity in suffering Sir John Johnson to go at large, while in his power, was again misconstrued into a crime: he had thus enabled that dangerous man to renew his hostilities. Finally, it was insinuated that he was untrue to his country, if not positively leagued with her enemies.

These imputations were not generally ad-

vanced; and when advanced, were not generally countenanced; but a committee of King's County appears to have given them credence, addressing a letter to the commander-in-chief on the subject, accompanied by documents.

Washington, to whom Schuyler's heart had been laid open throughout all its trials, and who knew its rectitude, received the letter and documents with indignation and disgust, and sent copies of them to the general. "From these," said he, "you will readily discover the diabolical and insidious arts and schemes carrying on by the tories and friends of government to raise distrust, dissensions, and divisions among us. Having the utmost confidence in your integrity, and the most incontestable proof of your great attachment to our common country and its interest, I could not but look upon the charge against you with an eye of disbelief, and sentiments of detestation and abhorrence; nor should I have troubled you with the matter, had I not been informed that copies were sent to different committees, and to Governor Trumbull, which I conceived would get abroad, and that you, should you find I had been furnished with them, would consider my suppressing them as an evidence of my belief, or at best of my doubts, of the charges." *

* Washington to Schuyler, May 21st.

We will go forward, and give the sequel of this matter. While the imputations in question had merely floated in public rumor, Schuyler had taken no notice of them; "but it is now," writes he, in reply to Washington, "a duty which I owe myself and my country, to detect the scoundrels, and the only means of doing this is by requesting that an immediate inquiry be made into the matter; when I trust it will appear that it was more a scheme calculated to ruin me, than to disunite and create jealousies in the friends of America. Your Excellency, will, therefore, please to order a court of inquiry the soonest possible; for I cannot sit easy under such an infamous imputation; since on this extensive continent numbers of the most respectable characters may not know what your Excellency and Congress do of my principles and exertions in the common cause."

He further adds: "I am informed by persons of good credit, that about one hundred persons, living on what are commonly called the New Hampshire Grants, have had a design to seize me as a tory, and perhaps still have. There never was a man so infamously scandalized and ill-treated as I am."

We need only add, that the Berkshire committees which, in a time of agitation and alarm, had hastily given countenance to these

imputations, investigated them deliberately in their cooler moments, and acknowledged, in a letter to Washington, that they were satisfied their suspicions respecting General Schuyler were wholly groundless. "We sincerely hope," added they, "his name may be handed down, with immortal honor, to the latest posterity, as one of the great pillars of the American cause."

Chapter VI.

Gates Sent to Philadelphia with the Canada Despatches—Promoted to the Rank of Major-General—Washington Summoned to Philadelphia—Putnam Left in Command—Conference with Congress—Army Arrangements—A Board of War Instituted—The Clintons of New York—Mrs. Washington Inoculated—Reed Made Adjutant-General.

AS the reverses in Canada would affect the fortunes of the Revolution elsewhere, Washington sent General Gates to lay the despatches concerning them before Congress. "His military experience," said he, "and intimate acquaintance with the situation of our affairs, will enable him to give Congress the fullest satisfaction about the measures necessary to be adopted at this alarming crisis; and, with his zeal and attachment to the cause of America, he will have a claim to their notice and favors."

Scarce had Gates departed on his mission

(May 19th), when Washington himself received a summons to Philadelphia, to advise with Congress concerning the opening campaign. He was informed also that Gates, on the 16th of May, had been promoted to the rank of major-general, and Mifflin to that of brigadier-general, and a wish was intimated that they might take the command of Boston.

Washington prepared to proceed to Philadelphia. His general orders issued on the 19th of May, show the anxious situation of affairs at New York. In case of an alarm the respective regiments were to draw up opposite to their encampments or quarters, until ordered to repair to the alarm posts. The alarm signals for regulars, militia, and the inhabitants of the city, were, in the daytime, two cannon fired from the rampart at Fort George, and a flag hoisted on the top of Washington's headquarters. In the night, two cannon fired as above, and two lighted lanterns hoisted on the top of headquarters.*

* The following statement of the batteries at New York, we find dated May 22d :

The *Grand Battery*, on the south part of the town.

Fort George, immediately above it.

White Hall Battery, on the left of the Grand Battery.

Oyster Battery, behind General Washington's headquarters.

In his parting instructions to Putman, who, as the oldest major-general in the city, would have the command during his absence, Washington informed him of the intention of the Provincial Congress of New York to seize the principal tories and disaffected persons in the city and the surrounding country, especially on Long Island, and authorized him to afford military aid, if required, to carry the same into execution. He was also to send Lord Stirling, Colonel Putnam the engineer, and Colonel Knox, if he could be spared, up to the Highlands, to examine the state of the forts and garrisons, and report what was necessary to put them in a posture of defense. Their garrisons were chiefly composed of parts of a regiment of New York troops, commanded by Colonel James Clinton, of Ulster County, and were said to be sufficient.

The general, accompanied by Mrs. Wash-

Grenadier Battery, near the Brew House on the North River.

Jersey Battery, on the left of the Grenadier Battery.

Bayard's Hill Redoubt, on Bayard's Hill.

Spencer's Redoubt, on the hill where his brigade is encamped.

Waterbury's Battery (fascines), on a wharf below this hill.

Badlam's Redoubt, on a hill near the Jews' burying-ground.

ington, departed from New York on the 21st of May, and they were invited by Mr. Hancock, the President of Congress, to be his guests during their sojourn at Philadelphia.

Lee, when he heard of Washington's visit there, argued good effects from it. "I am extremely glad, dear general," writes he, "that you are in Philadelphia, for their councils sometimes lack a little of military electricity."

Washington, in his conferences with Congress, appears to have furnished this electricity. He roundly expressed his conviction, that no accommodation could be effected with Great Britain, on acceptable terms. Ministerialists had declared in Parliament, that, the sword being drawn, the most coercive measures would be persevered in, until there was complete submission. The recent subsidizing of foreign troops was a part of this policy, and indicated unsparing hostility. A protracted war, therefore, was inevitable; but it would be impossible to carry it on successfully with the scanty force actually embodied, and with transient enlistments of militia.

In consequence of his representations, resolutions were passed in Congress that soldiers should be enlisted for three years, with a bounty of ten dollars for each recruit; that

the army at New York should be reinforced until the 1st of December, with thirteen thousand eight hundred militia; that gondolas and fire-rafts should be built, to prevent the men-of-war and enemy's ships from coming into New York Bay, or the Narrows; and that a flying camp of ten thousand militia, furnished by Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Maryland, and likewise engaged until the 1st of December, should be stationed in the Jerseys for the defense of the Middle colonies. Washington was, moreover, empowered, in case of emergency, to call on the neighboring colonies for temporary aid with their militia.

Another important result of his conferences with Congress was the establishment of a war office. Military affairs had hitherto been referred in Congress to committees casually appointed, and had consequently been subject to great irregularity and neglect. Henceforth a permanent committee, entitled "the Board of War and Ordnance," was to take cognizance of them. The first board was composed of five members: John Adams, Colonel Benjamin Harrison, Roger Sherman, James Wilson, and Edward Rutledge; with Richard Peters as secretary. It went into operation on the 12th of June.

While at Philadelphia, Washington had fre-

quent consultations with George Clinton, one of the delegates from New York, concerning the interior defenses of that province, especially those connected with the security of the Highlands of the Hudson, where part of the regiment of Colonel James Clinton, the brother of the delegate, was stationed. The important part which these brothers were soon to act in the military affairs of that province, and ultimately in its political history, entitles them to a special notice.

They were of the old Clinton stock of England, being descended from General James Clinton, an adherent of royalty in the time of the civil wars, but who passed over to Ireland, after the death of Charles I. Their father, Charles Clinton, grandson of the general, emigrated to America in 1729, and settled in Ulster, now Orange County, just above the Highlands of the Hudson. Though not more than fifty miles from the city of New York, it was at that time on the borders of a wilderness, where every house had at times to be a fortress. Charles Clinton, like most men on our savage frontier in those days, was a warrior by necessity, if not by choice. He took an active part in Indian and French wars, commanded a provincial regiment stationed at Fort Herkimer, joined in the expedition

under General Bradstreet, when it passed up the valley of the Mohawk, and was present at the capture of Fort Frontenac. His sons, James and George, one twenty, the other seventeen years of age, served in the same campaign, the one as captain, the other as lieutenant; thus taking an early lesson in that school of American soldiers, the French war.

James, whose propensities were always military, continued in the provincial army until the close of that war; and afterwards, when settled on an estate in Ulster County, was able and active in organizing its militia. George applied himself to the law, and became successful at the bar, in the same county. Their father, having laid aside the sword, occupied for many years, with discernment and integrity the honorable station of Judge of the Court of Common Pleas. He died in Ulster County, in 1773, in the eighty-third year of his age, "in full view of that Revolution in which his sons were to act distinguished parts." With his latest breath he charged them to "stand by the liberties of their country."

They needed no such admonition. From the very first, they had been heart and hand in the cause. George had championed it for years in the New York Legislature, signalizing

himself by his zeal as one of an intrepid minority in opposing ministerial oppression. He had but recently taken his seat as delegate to the Continental Congress.

James Clinton, appointed colonel on the 30th of June, 1775, had served with his regiment of New York troops under Montgomery at the siege of St. John's, and the capture of Montreal, after which he had returned home. He had subsequently been appointed to the command of a regiment in one of the four battalions raised for the defense of New York. We shall soon have occasion to speak further of these patriot brothers.

The prevalence of the small-pox had frequently rendered Washington uneasy on Mrs. Washington's account during her visits to the army ; he was relieved, therefore, by her submitting to inoculation during their sojourn in Philadelphia, and having a very favorable time.

He was gratified, also, by procuring the appointment of his late secretary, Joseph Reed, to the post of adjutant-general, vacated by the promotion of General Gates, thus placing him once more by his side.

Chapter VII.

Affairs in Canada—Disaster at the Cedars—Hostile Designs of the Johnsons—A Bloody Summer Expected—Forts in the Highlands—Colonel James Clinton in Command—Fortifications at King's Bridge and on Long Island.

DESPATCHES from Canada continued to be disastrous. General Arnold, who was in command at Montreal, had established a post on the St. Lawrence, about forty miles above that place, on a point of land called the Cedars, where he had stationed Colonel Bedel, with about four hundred men, to prevent goods being sent to the enemy, in the upper country, and to guard against surprise from them, or their Indians.

In the latter part of May, Colonel Bedel received intelligence that a large body of British, Canadians, and Indians, under the command of Captain Forster, were coming down from Oswegatchie, to attack him. Leaving Major

Butterfield in command of the post, he hastened down to Montreal to obtain reinforcements. Arnold immediately detached one hundred men, under Major Shelburne, and prepared to follow in person, with a much greater force. In the meantime, the post at the Cedars had been besieged, and Major Butterfield intimidated into a surrender, by a threat from Captain Forster, that resistance would provoke a massacre of his whole garrison by the Indians. The reinforcements under Major Shelburne were assailed within four miles of the Cedars, by a large party of savages, and captured after a sharp skirmish, in which several were killed on both sides.

Arnold received word of these disasters while on the march. He instantly sent forward some Caughnawaga Indians, to overtake the savages, and demand a surrender of the prisoners; with a threat that, in case of a refusal, and that any of them were murdered, he would sacrifice every Indian who fell into his hands, and would follow the offenders to their towns, and destroy them by fire and sword. He now embarked four hundred of his men in bateaux, and pushed on with the remainder by land. Arriving at St. Ann's, above the rapids of the St. Lawrence, he discovered several of the enemy's bateaux, taking the prisoners off from an island,

a league distant. It was a tormenting sight, as it was not in his power to relieve them. His bateaux were a league behind, coming up the rapids very slowly. He sent several expresses to hurry them. It was sunset before they arrived, and he could embark all his people; in the meantime, his Caughnawaga messengers returned with an answer from the savages. They have five hundred prisoners collected together, they said, at Quinze Chiens, where they were posted; should he offer to land and attack them, they would kill every prisoner, and give no quarter to any who should fall into their hands thereafter.

"Words cannot express my feelings," writes Arnold, "at the delivery of this message. Torn by the conflicting passions of revenge and humanity, a sufficient force to take ample revenge, raging for action, urged me on one hand, and humanity for five hundred unhappy wretches, who were on the point of being sacrificed, if our vengeance was not delayed, pleaded equally strong on the other." In this situation, he ordered the boats to row immediately for the island, whither he had seen the enemy taking their prisoners. Before he reached it, the savages had conveyed them all away, excepting five, whom he found naked, and almost starved, and one or two whom

being unwell, they had butchered. Arnold now pushed for Quinze Chiens, about four miles distant, on the mainland. Here was the whole force of the enemy, civilized and savage, intrenched and fortified. As Arnold approached, they opened a fire upon his boats, with small-arms, and two brass six-pounders. He rowed near the land without returning a shot. By this time it was too dark to distinguish anything on shore, and being unacquainted with the ground, he judged it prudent to return to St. John's.

Here he called a council of war, and it was determined to attack the enemy early in the morning. In the course of the night, a flag was sent by Captain Forster, with articles for an exchange of prisoners which had been entered into by him and Major Shelburne. As the terms were not equal, they were objected to by Arnold, and a day passed before they were adjusted. A cartel was then signed, by which the prisoners, consisting of two majors, nine captains, twenty subalterns, and four hundred and forty-three privates, were to be exchanged for an equal number of British prisoners of the same rank, and were to be sent to the south shore of the St. Lawrence, near Caughnawaga, whence to return to their homes. Nine days were allowed for the delivery of the pris-

oners, during which time hostilities should be suspended.

Arnold, in a letter to the commissioners of Congress then at Montreal, giving an account of this arrangement, expressed his indignation at the conduct of the king's officers, in employing savages to screen their butcheries, and suffering their prisoners to be killed in cold blood. "I intend being with you this evening," added he, "to consult on some effectual measures to take with these savages, and still more savage British troops, who are still at Quinze Chiens. As soon as our prisoners are released, I hope it will be in our power to take ample vengeance, or nobly fall in the attempt." *

The accounts which reached Washington of these affairs were vague and imperfect, and kept him for some days in painful suspense. The disasters at the Cedars were attributed entirely to the base and cowardly conduct of Bedel and Butterworth, and he wrote to Schuyler to have good courts appointed, and bring them, and every other officer guilty of misconduct, to trial.

"The situation of our affairs in Canada," observes he, "is truly alarming. I sincerely wish the next letters from the northward may

* Arnold to the Commissioners of Congress, 27th May.

not contain the melancholy advices of General Arnold's defeat, and the loss of Montreal. The most vigorous exertions will be necessary to retrieve our circumstances there, and I hope you will strain every nerve for that purpose. Unless it can be done now, Canada will be lost to us forever."

While his mind was agitated by these concerns, letters from Schuyler showed that mischief was brewing in another quarter.

Colonel Guy Johnson, accompanied by Sachem Brant and the Butlers, had been holding councils with the Indians, and designed, it was said, to come back to the Mohawk country, at the head of a British and savage force. A correspondence was carried on between him and his cousin, Sir John Johnson, who was said to be preparing to co-operate with his Scotch dependants and Indian allies.

Considering this a breach of Sir John's parole, Schuyler had sent Colonel Elias Dayton with a force to apprehend him. Sir John, with a number of his armed tenants, retreated for refuge among the Indians, on the borders of the lakes. Dayton took temporary possession of Johnson Hall, placed guards about it, seized upon Sir John's papers, and read them in presence of Lady Johnson, and subsequently conveyed her ladyship as a kind of hostage to Albany.

Shortly afterwards came further intelligence of the designs of the Johnsons. Sir John, with his Scotch warriors and Indian allies, was said to be actually coming down the valley of the Mohawk, bent on revenge, and prepared to lay everything waste; and Schuyler collecting a force at Albany to oppose him. Washington instantly wrote to Schuyler, to detach Colonel Dayton with his regiment on that service, with instructions to secure a post where Fort Stanwix formerly stood, in the time of the French war. As to Schuyler himself, Washington, on his own responsibility, directed him to hold a conference with the Six Nations, and with any others whom he and his brother commissioners on Indian affairs might think necessary, and secure their active services, without waiting further directions from Congress—that body having recently resolved to employ the Indian allies in the war, the enemy having set the example.

"We expect a bloody summer in New York and Canada," writes Washington to his brother Augustine, "and I am sorry to say that we are not, either in men or arms, prepared for it. However, it is to be hoped, that, if our cause is just, as I most religiously believe it, the same Providence which has in many instances appeared for us, will still go on to afford its aid."

Lord Stirling, who, by Washington's orders, had visited and inspected the defenses in the Highlands, rendered a report of their condition, of which we give the purport. Fort Montgomery, at the lower part of the Highlands, was on the west bank of the river, north of Dunderberg (or Thunder Hill). It was situated on a bank one hundred feet high. The river at that place was about half a mile wide. Opposite the fort was the promontory of Anthony's Nose, many hundred feet high, accessible only to goats, or men expert in climbing. A body of riflemen stationed here, might command the decks of vessels. Fort Montgomery appeared to Lord Stirling the proper place for a guard post.

Fort Constitution was about six miles higher up the river, on a rocky island of the same name, at a narrow strait where the Hudson, shouldered by precipices, makes a sudden bend round West Point. A redoubt, in the opinion of Lord Stirling, would be needed on the point, not only for the preservation of Fort Constitution, but for its own importance.

The garrison of that fort consisted of two companies of Colonel James Clinton's regiment, and Captain Wisner's company of minute men, in all one hundred and sixty rank and file. Fort Montgomery was garrisoned by three companies of the same regiment, about two

hundred rank and file. Both garrisons were miserably armed. The direction of the works of both forts was in the hands of commissioners appointed by the Provincial Congress of New York. The general command of the posts required to be adjusted. Several persons accused of being "notorious tories," had recently been sent into Fort Montgomery by the district committees of the counties of Albany, Dutchess, and Westchester, with directions to the commanding officers, to keep them at hard labor until their further order. They were employed upon the fortifications.

In view of all these circumstances, Washington, on the 14th of June, ordered Colonel James Clinton to take command of both posts, and of all the troops stationed at them. He seemed a fit custodian for them, having been a soldier from his youth; brought up on a frontier subject to Indian alarms and incursions, and acquainted with the strong points and fastnesses of the Highlands.

King's Bridge, and the heights adjacent, considered by General Lee of the utmost importance to the communication between New York and the mainland, and to the security of the Hudson, were reconnoitered by Washington on horseback, about the middle of the month; ordering where works should be laid out.

Breastworks were to be thrown up for the defense of the bridge, and an advanced work (subsequently called Fort Independence), was to be built beyond it, on a hill commanding Spyt den Duivel Creek, as that inlet of the Hudson is called, which links it with the Harlaem River.

A strong work, intended as a kind of citadel, was to crown a rocky height between two and three miles south of the bridge, commanding the channel of the Hudson; and below it were to be redoubts on the banks of the river at Jeffrey's Point. In honor of the general, the citadel received the name of Fort Washington.

Colonel Rufus Putnam was the principal engineer, who had the direction of the works. General Mifflin encamped in their vicinity, with part of the two battalions from Pennsylvania, to be employed in their construction, aided by the militia.

While these preparations were made for the protection of the Hudson, the works about Brooklyn on Long Island were carried on with great activity, under the superintendence of General Greene. In a word, the utmost exertions were made at every point, to put the city, its environs, and the Hudson River, in a state of defense, before the arrival of another hostile armament.

Chapter VIII.

Retreat of General Thomas—His Death—General Sullivan in Command—Scene on the Sorel—Sanguine Expectations of Sullivan—Washington's Opinion of Sullivan's Character—Gates Appointed to the Command in Canada—Reinforcements of the Enemy—Reverses—Thompson Captured—Retreat of Sullivan—Close of the Invasion of Canada.

OPERATIONS in Canada were drawing to a disastrous close. General Thomas, finding it impossible to make a stand at Point Deschambault, had continued his retreat to the mouth of the Sorel, where he found General Thompson with part of the troops detached by Washington, from New York, who were making some preparations for defense. Shortly after his arrival, he was taken ill with the small-pox, and removed to Chamblee. He had prohibited inoculation among his troops, because it put too many of their scanty number on the sick list; he prob-

ably fell a victim to his own prohibition, as he died of that malady on the 2d of June.

On his death, General Sullivan, who had recently arrived with the main detachment of troops from New York, succeeded to the command, General Wooster having been recalled. He advanced immediately with his brigade to the mouth of the Sorel, where he found General Thompson with but very few troops to defend that post, having detached Colonel St. Clair, with six or seven hundred men, to Three Rivers, about fifty miles down the St. Lawrence, to give check to an advanced corps of the enemy of about eight hundred regulars and Canadians, under the veteran Scot, Colonel Maclean. In the meantime General Thompson, who was left with but two hundred men to defend his post, was sending off his sick and his heavy baggage, to be prepared for a retreat, if necessary. "It really was affecting," writes Sullivan to Washington, "to see the banks of the Sorel lined with men, women, and children, leaping and clapping their hands for joy, to see me arrive; it gave no less joy to General Thompson, who seemed to be wholly forsaken, and left to fight against an unequal force, or retreat before them."

Sullivan proceeded forthwith to complete the works on the Sorel; in the meantime he de-

tached General Thompson with additional troops to overtake St. Clair, and assume command of the whole party, which would then amount to two thousand men. He was by no means to attack the encampment at Three Rivers, unless there was great prospect of success, as his defeat might prove the total loss of Canada. "I have the highest opinion of the bravery and resolution of the troops you command," says Sullivan in his instructions, "and doubt not but, under the direction of a kind Providence, you will open the way for our recovering that ground which former troops have so shamefully lost."

Sullivan's letter to Washington, written at the same time, is full of sanguine anticipation. It was his fixed determination to gain post at Deschambault, and fortify it so as to make it inaccessible. "The enemy's ships are now above that place," writes he; "but if General Thompson succeeds at Three Rivers, I will soon remove the ships below Richelieu Falls, and after that, approach Quebec as fast as possible."

"Our affairs here," adds he, "have taken a strange turn since our arrival. The Canadians are flocking by hundreds to take a part with us. The only reason of their disaffection was, because our exertions were so feeble that they

doubted much of our success, and even of our ability to protect them.

"I venture to assure you, and the Congress, that I can in a few days reduce the army to order, and, with the assistance of a kind Providence, put a new face to our affairs here, which a few days since seemed almost impossible."

The letter of Sullivan gave Washington an unexpected gleam of sunshine. "Before it came to hand," writes he in reply, "I almost dreaded to hear from Canada, as my advices seemed to promise nothing favorable, but rather further misfortunes. But I now hope that our affairs, from the confused, distracted, and almost forlorn state in which you found them, will change, and assume an aspect of order and success." Still his sagacious mind perceived a motive for this favorable coloring of affairs. Sullivan was aiming at the command in Canada; and Washington soberly weighed his merits for the appointment, in a letter to the President of Congress. "He is active, spirited, and zealously attached to the cause. He has his wants, and he has his foibles. The latter are manifested in his little tincture of vanity, and in an over-desire of being popular, which now and then lead him into embarrassments. His wants are common to us all. He wants experience to move upon a grand scale;

for the limited and contracted knowledge, which any of us have in military matters, stands in very little stead." This want was overbalanced, on the part of General Sullivan, by sound judgment, some acquaintance with men and books, and an enterprising genius.

"As the security of Canada is of the last importance to the well-being of these colonies," adds Washington, "I should like to know the sentiments of Congress, respecting the nomination of any officer to that command. The character I have drawn of General Sullivan is just, according to my ideas of him. Congress will therefore determine upon the propriety of continuing him in Canada, or sending another, as they shall see fit." *

Scarce had Washington despatched this letter, when he received one from the President of Congress, dated the 18th of June, informing him that Major-General Gates had been appointed to command the forces in Canada, and requesting him to expedite his departure as soon as possible. The appointment of Gates has been attributed to the influence of the eastern delegates, with whom he was a favorite; indeed, during his station at Boston, he had been highly successful in cultivating the

* Washington to the President of Congress, July 12, 1776.

good graces of the New England people. He departed for his command on the 26th of June, vested with extraordinary powers for the regulation of affairs in that "distant, dangerous, and shifting scene." "I would fain hope," writes Washington, "his arrival there will give our affairs a complexion different from what they have worn for a long time past, and that many essential benefits will result from it."

Despatches just received from General Sullivan, had given a different picture of affairs in Canada from that contained in his previous letter. In fact, when he wrote that letter, he was ignorant of the actual force of the enemy in Canada, which had recently been augmented to about 13,000 men; several regiments having arrived from Ireland, one from England, another from General Howe, and a body of Brunswick troops under the Baron Reidesel. Of these, the greater part were on their way up from Quebec in divisions, by land and water, with Generals Carleton, Burgoyne, Philips, and Riedesel; while a considerable number under General Frazer had arrived at Three Rivers, and others, under General Nesbit, lay near them on board of transports.

Sullivan's despatch, dated on the 8th of June, at the mouth of the Sorel, began in his

former sanguine vein, anticipating the success of General Thompson's expedition to Three Rivers. He has proceeded in the manner proposed, and made his attack at daylight, for at that time a very heavy cannonading began, which lasted with some intervals to twelve o'clock. It is now near one P.M.; the firing has ceased except some irregular firing with cannon at a considerable distance of time one from the other. At eight o'clock a very heavy firing of small-arms was heard even here, at the distance of forty-five miles. I am almost certain that victory has declared in our favor, as the irregular firing of the cannon for such a length of time after the small-arms ceased, shows that our men are in possession of the ground."

The letter was kept open to give the particulars of this supposed victory; it closed with a dismal reverse. General Thompson had coasted in bateaux along the right bank of the river at that expanse called Lake St. Pierre, and arrived at Nicolete, where he found St. Clair and his detachment. He crossed the river in the night, and landed a few miles above Three Rivers, intending to surprise the enemy before daylight; he was not aware at the time that additional troops had arrived under General Burgoyne.

After landing, he marched with rapidity tow-

ards Three Rivers, but was led by treacherous guides into a morass, and obliged to return back nearly two miles. Day broke, and he was discovered from the ships. A cannonade was opened upon his men as they made their way slowly for an hour and a half through a swamp. At length they arrived in sight of Three Rivers, but it was to find a large force drawn up in battle array, under General Frazer, by whom they were warmly attacked, and after a brief stand thrown into confusion. Thompson attempted to rally his troops, and partly succeeded, until a fire was opened upon them in rear by Nesbit, who had landed from his ships. Their rout now was complete. General Thompson, Colonel Irvine, and about two hundred men were captured, twenty-five were slain, and the rest pursued for several miles through a deep swamp. After great fatigues and sufferings, they were able to get on board of their boats, which had been kept from falling into the hands of the enemy. In these they made their way back to the Sorel, bringing General Sullivan a sad explanation of all the firing he had heard, and the alarming intelligence of the overpowering force that was coming up the river.

"This, my dear general," writes Sullivan, in the conclusion of his letter, "is the state of

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fate unfortunate enterprise. What you will next hear I cannot say. I am every moment informed of the vast number of the enemy which have arrived. I have only two thousand five hundred and forty-three rank and file. Most of the officers seem discouraged, and, of course, their men. I am employed day and night in fortifying and securing my camp, and am determined to hold it as long as a person will stick by me."

He had indeed made the desperate resolve to defend the mouth of the Sorel, but was induced to abandon it by the unanimous opinion of his officers and the evident unwillingness of his troops. Dismantling his batteries, therefore, he retreated with his artillery and stores, just before the arrival of the enemy, and was followed, step by step along the Sorel, by a strong column under General Burgoyne.

On the 18th of June he was joined by General Arnold with three hundred men, the garrison of Montreal, who had crossed at Longueil just in time to escape a large detachment of the enemy. Thus reinforced, and the evacuation of Canada being determined on in a council of war, Sullivan succeeded in destroying everything at Chamblee and St. John's that he could not carry away, breaking down bridges, and leaving forts and vessels in flames, and contin-

ued his retreat to the Isle aux Noix, where he made a halt for some days, until he should receive positive orders from Washington or General Schuyler. In a letter to Washington, he observes, "I am extremely sorry it was not in my power to fulfil your Excellency's wishes, by leading on our troops to victory." After stating the reason of his failure, he adds, "I think we shall secure all the public stores and baggage of the army, and secure our retreat with very little loss. Whether we shall have well men enough to carry them on, I much doubt, if we don't remove quickly; unless Heaven is pleased to restore health to this wretched army, now, perhaps, the most pitiful one that ever was formed."

The low, unhealthy situation of the Isle aux Noix, obliged him soon to remove his camp to the Isle La Motte, whence, on receiving orders to that effect from General Schuyler, he ultimately embarked with his forces, sick and well, for Crown Point.

Thus ended this famous invasion; an enterprise bold in its conceptions, daring and hardy in its execution; full of ingenious expedients and hazardous exploits; and which, had not unforeseen circumstances counteracted its well-devised plans, might have added all Canada to the American Confederacy.

Chapter IX.

Designs of the Enemy against New York and the Hudson—Plot of Tryon and the Tories—Arrival of a Fleet—Alarm Posts—Treachery up the Hudson—Fresh Arrivals—General Howe at Staten Island—Washington's Preparations.

THE great aim of the British, at present, was to get possession of New York and the Hudson, and make them the basis of military operations. This they hoped to effect on the arrival of a powerful armament, hourly expected, and designed for operations on the seaboard.

At this critical juncture there was an alarm of a conspiracy among the tories in the city and on Long Island, suddenly to take up arms and co-operate with the British troops on their arrival. The wildest reports were in circulation concerning it. Some of the tories were to break down King's Bridge, others were to blow up the magazines, spike the guns, and massacre

all the field-officers. Washington was to be killed or delivered up to the enemy. Some of his own body-guard were said to be in the plot.

Several publicans of the city were pointed out as having aided or abetted the plot. One was landlord of the "Highlander," at the corner of Beaver Street and Broadway. Another dispensed liquor under the sign of "Robin Hood." Another, named Lowry, described as a "fat man in a blue coat," kept tavern in a low house opposite the Oswego market. Another, James Houlding, kept a beer-house in Tryon Row, opposite the gates of the upper barracks. It would seem as if a network of corruption and treachery had been woven throughout the city by means of these liquor dealers. One of the most noted, however, was Corbie, whose tavern was said to be "to the southeast of General Washington's house, to the westward of Bayard's Woods, and north of Lispenard's Meadows," from which it would appear that, at that time, the general was quartered at what was formerly called Richmond Hill; a mansion surrounded by trees, at a short distance from the city, in rather an isolated situation.

A committee of the New York Congress, of which John Jay was chairman, traced the plot up to Governor Tryon, who, from his safe re-

treat on shipboard, acted through agents on shore. The most important of these was David Matthews, the tory mayor of the city. He was accused of disbursing money to enlist men, purchase arms, and corrupt the soldiery.

Washington was authorized and requested by the committee, to cause the mayor to be apprehended, and all his papers secured. Matthews was at that time residing at Flatbush, on Long Island, at no great distance from General Greene's encampment. Washington transmitted the warrant of the committee to the general on the 21st, with directions that it should "be executed with precision, and exactly by one o'clock of the ensuing morning, by a careful officer."

Precisely at the hour of one, a detachment from Greene's brigade surrounded the house of the mayor, and secured his person; but no papers were found, though diligent search was made.

Numerous other arrests took place, and among the number, some of Washington's body-guard. A great dismay fell upon the tories. Some of those on Long Island who had proceeded to arm themselves, finding the plot discovered, sought refuge in woods and morasses. Washington directed that those arrested, who belonged to the army, should be

tried by a court-martial, and the rest handed over to the secular power.

According to statements made before the committee, five guineas bounty was offered by Governor Tryon to each man who should enter the king's service; with a promise of two hundred acres of land for himself, one hundred for his wife, and fifty for each child. The men thus recruited were set to act on shore, in co-operation with the king's troops when they came.

Corbie's tavern, near Washington's quarters, was a kind of rendezvous of the conspirators. There one Gilbert Forbes, a gunsmith, "a short, thick man, with a white coat," enlisted men, gave them money, and "swore them on the book to secrecy." From this house a correspondence was kept up with Governor Tryon on shipboard, through a "mulatto-colored negro, dressed in blue clothes." At this tavern it was supposed Washington's body-guards were tampered with. Thomas Hickey, one of the guards, a dark-complexioned man, five feet six inches high, and well set, was said not only to be enlisted, but to have aided in corrupting his comrades; among others, Greene the drummer, and Johnson the fifer.

It was further testified before the committee, that one Sergeant Graham, an old soldier, for-

merly of the royal artillery, had been employed by Governor Tryon to prowl round and survey the grounds and works about the city, and on Long Island, and that, on information thus procured, a plan of operations had been concerted. On the arrival of the fleet, a man-of-war should cannonade the battery at Red Hook; while that was doing, a detachment of the army should land below with cannon, and by a circuitous march surprise and storm the works on Long Island. The shipping then, with the remainder of the army, were to divide, one part to run up the Hudson, the other up the East River; troops were to land above New York, secure the pass at King's Bridge, and cut off all communication between city and country.*

Much of the evidence given was of a dubious kind. It was certain that persons had secretly been enlisted, and sworn to hostile operations, but Washington did not think that any regular plan had been digested by the conspirators. "The matter," writes he, "I am in hopes, by a timely discovery, will be suppressed." †

According to the mayor's own admission before the committee, he had been cognizant of attempts to enlist tories and corrupt Wash-

* *Am. Archives*, 5th Series, vi., 1177.

† Washington to the President of Congress, June 28.

ington's guards, though he declared he had discountenanced them. He had on one occasion, also, at the request of Governor Tryon, paid money for him to Gilbert Forbes, the gunsmith, for rifles and round-bored guns which he had already furnished, and for others which he was to make. He had done so, however (according to his account), with great reluctance, and after much hesitation and delay, warning the gunsmith that he would be hanged if found out. The mayor, with a number of others, were detained in prison to await a trial.

Thomas Hickey, the individual of Washington's guard, was tried before a court-martial. He was an Irishman, and had been a deserter from the British army. The court-martial found him guilty of mutiny and sedition, and treacherous correspondence with the enemy, and sentenced him to be hanged.

The sentence was approved by Washington, and was carried promptly into effect, in the most solemn and impressive manner, to serve as a warning and example in this time of treachery and danger. On the morning of the 28th, all the officers and men off duty, belonging to the brigades of Heath, Spencer, Stirling, and Scott, assembled under arms at their respective parades at ten o'clock, and marched thence to the ground. Twenty men from each

brigade, with bayonets fixed, guarded the prisoner to the place of execution, which was a field near the Bowery Lane. There he was hanged in the presence, we are told, of nearly twenty thousand persons.

While the city was still brooding over this doleful spectacle, four ships-of-war, portentous visitants, appeared off the Hook, stood quietly in at the Narrows, and dropped anchor in the bay.

In his orderly book, Washington expressed a hope that the unhappy fate of Thomas Hickey, executed that day for mutiny, sedition, and treachery, would be a warning to every soldier in the line, to avoid the crimes for which he suffered.*

*As a specimen of the reports, which circulated throughout the country, concerning this conspiracy, we give an extract from a letter, written from Wethersfield, in Connecticut, 9th of July, 1776, by the Reverend John Marsh.

"You have heard of the infernal plot that has been discovered. About ten days before any of the conspirators were taken up, a woman went to the general and desired a private audience. He granted it to her, and she let him know that his life was in danger, and gave him such an account of the conspiracy as gained his confidence. He opened the matter to a few friends, on whom he could depend. A strict watch was kept night and day, until a favorable opportunity occurred; when the general went to bed as usual, arose about

On the 29th of June, an express from the lookout on Staten Island, announced that forty sail were in sight. They were, in fact, ships from Halifax, bringing between nine and ten thousand of the troops recently expelled from Boston, together with six transports filled with Highland troops, which had joined the fleet at sea. At sight of this formidable armament standing into the harbor, Washington instantly sent notice of its arrival to Colonel

two o'clock, told his lady he was a-going, with some of the Provincial Congress, to order some tories seized—desired she would make herself easy, and go to sleep. He went off without any of his aides-de-camp, except the captain of his life-guard, was joined by a number of chosen men, with lanterns, and proper instruments to break open houses, and before six o' clock next morning, had forty men under guard at the City Hall, among whom was the mayor of the city, several merchants, and five or six of his own life-guard. Upon examination, one Forbes confessed that the plan was to assassinate the general, and as many of the superior officers as they could, and to blow up the magazine upon the appearance of the enemy's fleet, and to go off in boats prepared for that purpose to join the enemy. Thomas Hickey, who has been executed, went from this place. He came from Ireland a few years ago. What will be done with the mayor is uncertain. He can't be tried by court-martial, and, it is said, there is no law of that colony by which he can be condemned. May he have his deserts."

James Clinton, who had command of the posts in the Highlands, and urged all possible preparations to give the enemy a warm reception should they push their frigates up the river.

According to general orders issued from headquarters on the following day (June 30th), the officers and men, not on duty, were to march from their respective regimental parades to their alarm posts, at least once every day, that they might become well acquainted with them. They were to go by routes least exposed to a fire from the shipping, and all the officers, from the highest to the lowest, were to make themselves well acquainted with the grounds. Upon a signal of the enemy's approach, or upon any alarm, all fatigue parties were immediately to repair to their respective corps, with their arms, ammunition, and accoutrements, ready for instant action.

It was ascertained that the ramifications of the conspiracy lately detected, extended up the Hudson. Many of the disaffected in the upper counties were enlisted in it. The committee of safety at Cornwall, in Orange County, sent word to Colonel James Clinton, Fort Constitution, of the mischief that was brewing. James Haff, a tory, had confessed before them, that he was one of a number who were to join the British troops as soon as they

should arrive. It was expected the latter would push up the river and land at Verplanck's Point; whereupon the guns at the forts in the Highlands were to be spiked by soldiers of their own garrisons; and the tories throughout the country were to be up in arms.*

Clinton received letters, also, from a meeting of committees in the precincts of Newburg, apprising him that persons dangerous to the cause were lurking in that neighborhood, and requesting him to detach twenty-five men under a certain lieutenant acquainted with the woods, "to aid in getting some of these rascals apprehended and secured."

While city and country were thus agitated by apprehensions of danger, internal and external, other arrivals swelled the number of ships in the bay of New York to one hundred and thirty men-of-war and transports. They made no movement to ascend the Hudson, but anchored off Staten Island, where they landed their troops, and the hill-sides were soon whitened with their tents.

In the frigate *Greyhound*, one of the four ships which first arrived, came General Howe. He had preceded the fleet in order to confer with Governor Tryon, and inform himself of

* Extracts from minutes of the committee. *Am. Archives*, 4th Series, vi., 1112.

the state of affairs. In a letter to his government he writes: "I met with Governor Tryon on board of a ship at the Hook, and many gentlemen, fast friends of government, attending him, from whom I have the fullest information of the state of the rebels. . . . We passed the Narrows with three ships-of-war, and the first division of transports, landed the grenadiers and light infantry, as the ships came up, on this island, to the great joy of a most loyal people, long suffering on that account under the oppression of the rebels stationed among them; who precipitately fled on the approach of the shipping. . . . There is great reason to expect a numerous body of the inhabitants to join the army from the province of York, the Jerseys, and Connecticut, who, in this time of universal oppression, only wait for opportunities to give proofs of their loyalty and zeal." *

* Governor Tryon, in a letter dated about this time from on board of the *Duchess of Gordon*, off Staten Island, writes: "The testimony given by the inhabitants of the island, of loyalty to His Majesty, and attachment to his government, I flatter myself will be general throughout the province, as soon as the army gets the main body of the rebels between them and the sea; which will leave all the back country open to the command of the king's friends, and yield a plentiful resource of provisions for the army, and

Washington beheld the gathering storm with an anxious eye, aware that General Howe only awaited the arrival of his brother, the admiral, to commence hostile operations. He wrote to the President of Congress, urging a call on the Massachusetts government for its quota of continental troops; and the formation of a flying camp of ten thousand men, to be stationed in the Jerseys as a central force, ready to act in any direction as circumstances might require.

On the 2d of July, he issued a general order, calling upon the troops to prepare for a momentous conflict which was to decide their liberties and fortunes. Those who should signalize themselves by acts of bravery, would be noticed and rewarded; those who proved craven would be exposed and punished. No favor would be shown to such as refused or neglected to do their duty at so important a crisis.

place them in a better situation to cut off the rebels' retreat when forced from their stronghold."—*Am. Archives*, 5th Series, vi., 122.

Chapter X.

First Appearance of Alexander Hamilton—His Early Days—General Hugh Mercer in Command of the Flying Camp—Declaration of Independence—Announced to the Army — Downfall of the King's Statue.

ABOUT this time, we have the first appearance in the military ranks of the Revolution, of one destined to take an active and distinguished part in public affairs; and to leave the impress of his genius on the institutions of the country.

As General Greene one day, on his way to Washington's headquarters, was passing through a field,—then on the outskirts of the city, now in the heart of its busiest quarter, and known as "the Park,"—he paused to notice a provincial company of artillery, and was struck with its able performances, and with the tact and talent of its commander. He was a mere youth, apparently about twenty years of

age; small in person and stature, but remarkable for his alert and manly bearing. It was Alexander Hamilton.

Greene was an able tactician, and quick to appreciate any display of military science; a little conversation sufficed to convince him that the youth before him had a mind of no ordinary grasp and quickness. He invited him to his quarters, and from that time cultivated his friendship.

Hamilton was a native of the island of Nevis, in the West Indies, and at a very early age had been put in a counting-house at Santa Cruz. His nature, however, was aspiring. "I contemn the grovelling condition of a clerk to which my fortune condemns me," writes he to a youthful friend, "and would willingly risk my life, though not my character, to exalt my station. . . . I mean to prepare the way for futurity. I am no philosopher, and may be justly said to build castles in the air; yet we have seen such schemes succeed, when the projector is constant. I shall conclude by saying, I wish there was a war."

Still he applied himself with zeal and fidelity to the duties of his station, and such were the precocity of his judgment, and his aptness at accounts, that, before he was fourteen years of age, he was left for a brief interval, during

the absence of the principal, at the head of the establishment. While his situation in the house gave him a practical knowledge of business, and experience in finance, his leisure hours were devoted to self-cultivation. He made himself acquainted with mathematics and chemistry, and indulged a strong propensity to literature. Some early achievements of his pen attracted attention, and showed such proof of talent, that it was determined to give him the advantage of a regular education. He was accordingly sent to Elizabethtown, in the Jerseys, in the autumn of 1772, to prepare, by a course of studies, for admission into King's (now Columbia) College, at New York. He entered in the college as a private student, in the latter part of 1773, and endeavored, by diligent application, to fit himself for the medical profession.

The contentions of the colonies with the mother country gave a different direction and impulse to his ardent and aspiring mind. He soon signalized himself by the exercise of his pen, sometimes in a grave, sometimes in a satirical manner. On the 6th of July, 1774, there was a general meeting of the citizens in the "Fields," to express their abhorrence of the Boston Port Bill. Hamilton was present, and, prompted by his excited feelings and the

instigation of youthful companions, ventured to address the multitude. The vigor and maturity of his intellect, contrasted with his youthful appearance, won the admiration of his auditors; even his diminutive size gave additional effect to his eloquence.

The war, for which in his boyish days he had sighed, was approaching. He now devoted himself to military studies, especially pyrotechnics and gunnery, and formed an amateur corps out of a number of his fellow-students, and the young gentlemen of the city. In the month of March, 1776, he became captain of artillery, in a provincial corps, newly raised, and soon, by able drilling, rendered it conspicuous for discipline.

It was while exercising his artillery company that he attracted, as we have mentioned, the attention of General Greene. Further acquaintance heightened the general's opinion of his extraordinary merits, and he took an early occasion to introduce him to the commander-in-chief, by whom we shall soon find him properly appreciated.

A valuable accession to the army at this anxious time, was Washington's neighbor and former companion-in-arms, Hugh Mercer, the veteran of Culloden and Fort Duquesne. His military spirit was alert as ever; the talent he

had shown in organizing the Virginia militia, and his zeal and efficiency as a member of the committee of safety, had been properly appreciated by Congress, and on the 5th of June he had received the commission of brigadier-general. He was greeted by Washington with the right hand of fellowship. The flying camp was about forming. The committee of safety of Pennsylvania were forwarding some of the militia of that province to the Jerseys, to perform the service of the camp until the militia levies, specified by Congress, should arrive. Washington had the nomination of some continental officer to the command. He gave it to Mercer, of whose merits he felt sure, and sent him over to Paulus Hook, in the Jerseys, to make arrangements for the Pennsylvania militia as they should come in; recommending him to Brigadier-General William Livingston, as an officer on whose experience and judgment great confidence might be reposed.

Livingston was a man inexperienced in arms, but of education, talent, sagacity, and ready wit. He was of the New York family of the same name, but had resided for some time in the Jerseys, having a spacious mansion in Elizabethtown, which he had named Liberty Hall. Mercer and he were to consult together, and concert plans to repel invasions; the New

Jersey militia, however, were distinct from the flying camp, and only called out for local defense. New Jersey's greatest danger of invasion was from Staten Island, where the British were throwing up works, and whence they might attempt to cross to Amboy. The flying camp was therefore to be stationed in the neighborhood of that place.

"The known disaffection of the people of Amboy," writes Washington, "and the treachery of those on Staten Island, who, after the fairest professions, have shown themselves our most inveterate enemies, have induced me to give directions that all persons of known enmity and doubtful character should be removed from those places."

According to General Livingston's humorous account, his own village of Elizabethtown was not much more reliable, being peopled in those agitated times "by unknown, unrecommended strangers, guilty-looking tories, and very knavish whigs."

While danger was gathering round New York, and its inhabitants were in mute suspense and fearful anticipations, the General Congress at Philadelphia was discussing, with closed doors, what John Adams pronounced "the greatest question ever debated in America, and as great as ever was or will be debated

among men." The result was, a resolution passed unanimously, on the 2d of July, "that these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States."

"The 2d of July," adds the same patriot statesman, "will be the most memorable epoch in the history of America. I am apt to believe that it will be celebrated by succeeding generations, as the great anniversary festival. It ought to be commemorated as the day of deliverance, by solemn acts of devotion to Almighty God. It ought to be solemnized with pomp and parade, with shows, games, sports, guns, bells, bonfires, and illuminations, from one end of this continent to the other, from this time forth for evermore."

The glorious event has, indeed, given rise to an annual jubilee, but not on the day designated by Adams. The 4th of July is the day of national rejoicing, for on that day the "Declaration of Independence," that solemn and sublime document, was adopted. Tradition gives a dramatic effect to its announcement. It was known to be under discussion, but the closed doors of Congress excluded the populace. They awaited, in throngs, an appointed signal. In the steeple of the state-house was a bell, imported twenty-three years previously from London by the Provincial As-

sembly of Pennsylvania. It bore the portentous text from Scripture: "Proclaim liberty throughout all the land, unto all the inhabitants thereof." A joyous peal from that bell gave notice that the bill had been passed. It was the knell of British domination.

No one felt the importance of the event more deeply than John Adams, for no one had been more active in producing it. We quote his words written at the moment. "When I look back to the year 1761, and recollect the argument concerning writs of assistance in the superior court, which I have hitherto considered as the commencement of the controversy between Great Britain and America, and run through the whole period from that time to this, and recollect the series of political events, the chain of causes and effects, I am surprised at the suddenness, as well as the greatness of this Revolution; Great Britain has been filled with folly, America with wisdom."

His only regret was, that the declaration of independence had not been made sooner. "Had it been made seven months ago," said he, "we should have mastered Quebec, and been in possession of Canada, and might before this hour have formed alliances with foreign states. Many gentlemen in high stations, and of great influence, have been duped by the

ministerial bubble of commissioners to treat, and have been slow and languid in promoting measures for the reduction of that province."

Washington hailed the declaration with joy. It is true, it was but a formal recognition of a state of things which had long existed, but it put an end to all those temporizing hopes of reconciliation which had clogged the military action of the country.

On the 9th of July, he caused it to be read at six o'clock in the evening, at the head of each brigade of the army. "The general hopes," said he in his orders, "that this important event will serve as a fresh incentive to every officer and soldier, to act with fidelity and courage, as knowing that now the peace and safety of his country depend, under God, solely on the success of our arms; and that he is now in the service of a state, possessed of sufficient power to reward his merit, and advance him to the highest honors of a free country."

The excitable populace of New York were not content with the ringing of bells to proclaim their joy. There was a leaden statue of George III. in the Bowling Green in front of the fort. Since kingly rule is at an end, why retain its effigy? On the same evening, therefore, the statue was pulled down amid the shouts of the multitude, and broken up to be

Announcement of the [illegible]
Independence.
[illegible]

Chapter XI.

Arrival of More Ships—Movements of the *Phœnix* and the *Rose*—Panic in the City—Hostile Ships up the Hudson—Stir of War along the River—General George Clinton, and the Militia of Ulster County—Fresh Agitation of New York—Arrival of Lord Howe.

THE exultation of the patriots of New York, caused by the Declaration of Independence, was soon overclouded. On the 12th of July, several ships stood in from sea, and joined the naval force below. Every nautical movement was now a matter of speculation and alarm, and all the spy-glasses in the city were incessantly reconnoitering the bay.

"The enemy are now in the harbor," writes an American officer, "although they have not yet ventured themselves within gunshot of the city, but we hourly expect to be called into action. The whole army is out between two

and three every morning, at their respective alarm posts, and remain there until sunrise. I am morally certain that it will not be long before we have an engagement."

Scarce had his letter been penned, when two ships-of-war were observed getting under way, and standing toward the city. One was the *Phœnix*, of forty guns; the other the *Rose*, of twenty guns, commanded by Captain Wallace, of unenviable renown, who had marauded the New England coast, and domineered over Rhode Island. The troops were immediately at their alarm posts. It was about half-past three o'clock in the afternoon, as the ships and three tenders came sweeping up the bay with the advantage of wind and tide, and shaped their course up the Hudson. The batteries of the city and of Paulus Hook, on the opposite Jersey shore, opened a fire upon them. They answered it with broadsides. There was a panic throughout the city. Women and children ran hither and thither about the streets, mingling their shrieks and cries with the thundering of the cannon. "The attack has begun! The city is to be destroyed! What will become of us?"

The *Phœnix* and the *Rose* continued their course up the Hudson. They had merely fired upon the batteries as they passed; and on their

own part had sustained but little damage, their decks having ramparts of sand-bags. The ships below remained in sullen quiet at their anchors, and showed no intention of following them. The firing ceased. The fear of a general attack upon the city died away, and the agitated citizens breathed more freely.

Washington, however, apprehended this movement of the ships might be with a different object. They might be sent to land troops and seize upon the passes of the Highlands. Forts Montgomery and Constitution were far from complete, and were scantily manned. A small force might be sufficient to surprise them. The ships might intend, also, to distribute arms among the tories in the river counties, and prepare them to co-operate in the apprehended attack upon New York.

Thus thinking, the moment Washington saw these ships standing up the river, he sent off an express to put General Mifflin on the alert, who was stationed with his Philadelphia troops at Fort Washington and King's Bridge. The same express carried a letter from him to the New York Convention, at that time holding its sessions at White Plains, in Westchester County, apprising it of the impending danger. His immediate solicitude was for the safety of Forts Constitution and Montgomery.

Fortunately George Clinton, the patriotic legislator, had recently been appointed brigadier-general of the militia of Ulster and Orange counties. Called to his native State by his military duties in this time of danger, he had only remained in Congress to vote for the Declaration of Independence, and then hastened home. He was now at New Windsor, in Ulster County, just above the Highlands. Washington wrote to him on the afternoon of the 12th, urging him to collect as great a force as possible of the New York militia, for the protection of the Highlands against this hostile irruption, and to solicit aid, if requisite, from the western parts of Connecticut. "I have the strongest reason to believe," added he, "it will be absolutely necessary, if it were only to prevent an insurrection of your own tories."

Long before the receipt of Washington's letter, Clinton had been put on the alert. About nine o'clock on the morning of the 13th, an alarm gun from his brother at Fort Constitution, thundered through the echoing defiles of the mountains. Shortly afterwards, two river sloops came to anchor above the Highlands before the general's residence. Their captains informed him that New York had been attacked on the preceding afternoon. They had seen the cannonade from a distance, and judged

from the subsequent firing that the enemy's ships were up the river as far as King's Bridge.

Clinton was as prompt a soldier as he had been an intrepid legislator. The neighboring militia were forthwith put in motion. Three regiments were ordered out; one was to repair to Fort Montgomery; another to Fort Constitution; the third to rendezvous at Newburg, just above the Highlands, ready to hasten to the assistance of Fort Constitution, should another signal be given. All the other regiments under his command were to be prepared for service at a moment's notice. In ordering these hasty levies, however, he was as considerate as he was energetic. The colonels were directed to leave the frontier companies at home, to protect the country against the Indians, and some men out of each company to guard against internal enemies.

Another of his sagacious measures was to send expresses to all the owners of sloops and boats twenty miles up the west side of the river, to haul them off so as to prevent their grounding. Part of them were to be ready to carry over the militia to the forts; the rest were ordered down to Fort Constitution, where a chain of them might be drawn across the narrowest part of the river, to be set on fire, should the enemy's ships attempt to pass.

Having made these prompt arrangements, he proceeded early in the afternoon of the same day, with about forty of his own neighbors, to Fort Constitution; whence, leaving some with his brother, he pushed down on the same evening to Fort Montgomery, where he fixed his headquarters, as being nearer the enemy and better situated to discover their motions.

Here, on the following day (July 14th), he received Washington's letter, written two days previously; but by this time he had anticipated its orders, and stirred up the whole country. On that same evening, two or three hundred of the hardy Ulster yeomanry, roughly equipped, part of one of the regiments he had ordered out, marched into Fort Montgomery, headed by their colonel (Woodhull). Early the next morning five hundred of another regiment arrived, and he was told that parts of two other regiments were on the way.

"The men," writes he to Washington, "turn out of their harvest fields to defend their country with surprising alacrity. The absence of so many of them, however, at this time, when their harvests are perishing for want of the sickle, will greatly distress the country. I could wish, therefore, that a less number might answer the purpose."

On no one could this prompt and brave

gathering of the yeomanry produce a more gratifying effect than upon the commander-in-chief; and no one could be more feelingly alive, in the midst of stern military duties, to the appeal in behalf of the peaceful interests of the husbandman.

While the vigilant Clinton was preparing to defend the passes of the Highlands, danger was growing more imminent at the mouth of the Hudson.

New York has always been a city prone to agitations. That into which it was thrown on the afternoon of the 12th of July, by the broadsides of the *Phœnix* and the *Rose*, was almost immediately followed by another. On the same evening there was a great booming of cannon, with clouds of smoke, from the shipping at anchor at Staten Island. Every spy-glass was again in requisition. The British fleet were saluting a ship-of-the-line, just arrived from sea. She advanced grandly, every man-of-war thundering a salute as she passed. At her foretop mast-head she bore St. George's flag. "It is the admiral's ship!" cried the nautical men on the look-out at the Battery. "It is the admiral's ship!" was echoed from mouth to mouth, and the word soon flew through the city, "Lord Howe is come!"

Chapter XII.

Precautions against Tories—Secret Committees—Declaration of Lord Howe—His Letter to the Colonial Governors—His Letter to Washington Rejected—Interview between the British Adjutant-General and Colonel Reed—Reception of the Adjutant-General by Washington—The *Phœnix* and *Rose* in the Tappan Sea and Haverstraw Bay—Arming of the River Yeomanry—George Clinton at the Gates of the Highlands.

LORD HOWE was indeed come, and affairs now appeared to be approaching a crisis. In consequence of the recent conspiracy, the Convention of New York, seated at White Plains, in Westchester County, had a secret committee stationed in New York for the purpose of taking cognizance of traitorous machinations. To this committee Washington addressed a letter the day after his lordship's arrival, suggesting the policy of removing from the city and its environs, "all persons of known disaffection and enmity to

the cause of America" ; especially those confined in jail for treasonable offenses ; who might become extremely dangerous in case of an attack and alarm. He took this step with great reluctance ; but felt compelled to it by circumstances. The late conspiracy had shown him that treason might be lurking in his camp. And he was well aware that the city and the neighboring country, especially Westchester County, and Queens and Suffolk counties on Long Island, abounded with "tories" ready to rally under the royal standard whenever backed by a commanding force.

In consequence of his suggestion, thirteen persons in confinement for traitorous offenses, were removed to the jail of Litchfield in Connecticut. Among the number was the late mayor ; but as his offense was not of so deep a dye as those whereof the rest stood charged, it was recommended by the president of the Convention that he should be treated with indulgence.

The proceedings of Lord Howe soon showed the policy of these precautions. His lordship had prepared a declaration addressed to the people at large, informing them of the powers vested in his brother and himself as commissioners for restoring peace ; and inviting communities as well as individuals, who, in the

tumult and disasters of the times, had deviated from their allegiance to the crown, to merit and receive pardon by a prompt return to their duty. It was added, that proper consideration would be had of the services of all who should contribute to the restoration of public tranquillity.

His lordship really desired peace. According to a contemporary, he came to America "as a mediator, not as a destroyer," *and had founded great hopes in the efficacy of this document in rallying back the people to their allegiance; it was a sore matter of regret to him, therefore, to find that, in consequence of his tardy arrival, his invitation to loyalty had been forestalled by the Declaration of Independence.

Still it might have an effect in bringing adherents to the royal standard; he sent a flag on shore, therefore, bearing a circular letter, written in his civil and military capacity, to the colonial governor, requesting him to publish his address to the people as widely as possible.

We have heretofore shown the tenacity with which Washington, in his correspondence with Generals Gage and Howe, exacted the consideration and deference due to him as com-

* Letter of Mr. Dennis de Berdt to Mr. Joseph Reed. *Am. Archives*, 5th Series, i., 372.

mander-in-chief of the American armies; he did this not from official pride and punctilio, but as the guardian of American rights and dignities. A further step of the kind was yet to be taken. The British officers, considering the Americans in arms rebels without valid commissions, were in the habit of denying them all military title. Washington's general officers had urged him not to submit to this tacit indignity, but to reject all letters directed to him without a specification of his official rank.

An occasion now presented itself for the adjustment of this matter. Within a day or two an officer of the British navy, Lieutenant Brown, came with a flag from Lord Howe, seeking a conference with Washington. Colonel Reed, the adjutant-general, embarked in a barge, and met him half way between Governor's and Staten Islands. The lieutenant informed him that he was the bearer of a letter from Lord Howe to *Mr.* Washington. Colonel Reed replied, that he knew no such person in the American army. The lieutenant produced and offered the letter. It was addressed to George Washington, Esquire. He was informed that it could not be received with such a direction. The lieutenant expressed much concern. The letter, he said, was of a civil, rather than a military nature—Lord Howe re-

gretted he had not arrived sooner—he had great powers—it was much to be wished the letter could be received.

While the lieutenant was embarrassed and agitated, Reed maintained his coolness, politely declining to receive the letter, as inconsistent with his duty. They parted; but after the lieutenant had been rowed some little distance, his barge was put about, and Reed waited to hear what further he had to say. It was to ask by what title *General*—but catching himself, *Mr.* Washington chose to be addressed.

Reed replied that the general's station in the army was well known; and they could not be at a loss as to the proper mode of addressing him, especially as this matter had been discussed in the preceding summer, of which, he presumed, the admiral could not be ignorant. The lieutenant again expressed his disappointment and regret, and their interview closed.

On the 19th, an aide-de-camp of General Howe came with a flag, and requested to know, as there appeared to be an obstacle to a correspondence between the two generals, whether Colonel Patterson, the British adjutant-general, could be admitted to an interview with General Washington. Colonel Reed, who met the flag, consented in the name of the general, and pledged his honor for the safety of the adjutant-

general during the interview, which was fixed for the following morning.

At the appointed time, Colonel Reed, and Colonel Webb, one of Washington's aides, met the flag in the harbor, took Colonel Patterson into their barge, and escorted him to town, passing in front of the grand battery. The customary precaution of blindfolding was dispensed with; and there was a lively and sociable conversation the whole way. Washington received the adjutant-general at headquarters with much form and ceremony, in full military array, with his officers and guards about him.

Colonel Patterson addressing him by the title of *your excellency*, endeavored to explain the address of the letter as consistent with propriety, and founded on a similar address in the previous summer, to General Howe. That General Howe did not mean to derogate from the rank or respect of General Washington, but conceived such an address consistent with what had been used by ambassadors or plenipotentiaries where difficulties of rank had arisen. He then produced, but did not offer, a letter addressed to George Washington, Esquire, etc. etc., hoping that the *et ceteras*, which implied everything, would remove all impediments.

Washington replied that it was true the *et ceteras* implied everything, but they also im-

plied anything. His letter alluded to, of the previous summer, was in reply to one addressed in like manner. A letter, he added, addressed to a person acting in a public character, should have some inscriptions to designate it from a mere private letter; and he should absolutely decline any letter addressed to himself as a private person, when it related to his public station.

Colonel Patterson, finding the letter would not be received, endeavored, as far as he could recollect, to communicate the scope of it in the course of a somewhat desultory conversation. What he chiefly dwelt upon was, that Lord Howe and his brother had been specially nominated commissioners for the promotion of peace, which was esteemed a mark of favor and regard to America; that they had great powers, and would derive the highest pleasure from effecting an accommodation; and he concluded by adding, that he wished his visit to be considered as making the first advance toward that desirable object.

Washington replied that, by what had appeared (alluding, no doubt, to Lord Howe's circular), their powers, it would seem, were only to grant pardons. Now those who had committed no fault needed no pardon; and such was the case with the Americans, who were

only defending what they considered their indisputable rights.

Colonel Patterson avoided a discussion of this matter, which, he observed, would open a very wide field; so here the conference, which had been conducted on both sides with great courtesy, terminated. The colonel took his leave, excusing himself from partaking of a collation, having made a late breakfast, and was again conducted to his boat. He expressed himself highly sensible of the courtesy of his treatment, in having the usual ceremony of blindfolding dispensed with.

Washington received the applause of Congress and of the public for sustaining the dignity of his station. His conduct in this particular was recommended as a model to all American officers in corresponding with the enemy; and Lord Howe informed his government that, thenceforward, it would be politic to change the superscription of his letters.

In the meantime the irruption of the *Phœnix* and the *Rose* into the waters of the Hudson had roused a belligerent spirit along its borders. The lower part of that noble river is commanded on the eastern side by the bold woody heights of Manhattan Island and Westchester County, and on the western side by the rocky cliffs of the Palisades. Beyond those

cliffs, the river expands into a succession of what may almost be termed lakes; first the Tappan Sea, then Haverstraw Bay, then the Bay of Peekskill; separated from each other by long stretching points, or high beetling promontories, but affording ample sea-room and safe anchorage. Then come the redoubtable Highlands, that strait, fifteen miles in length, where the river bends its course, narrow and deep, between rocky, forest-clad mountains.

"He who has command of that grand defile," said an old navigator, "may at any time throttle the Hudson."

The New York Convention, aware of the impending danger, despatched military envoys to stir up the yeomanry along the river, and order out militia. Powder and ball were sent to Tarrytown, before which the hostile ships were anchored, and yeoman troops were stationed there and along the neighboring shores of the Tappan Sea. In a little while the militia of Dutchess County and Cortlandt's Manor were hastening, rudely armed, to protect the public stores at Peekskill, and mount guard at the entrance of the Highlands.

No one showed more zeal in this time of alarm, than Colonel Pierre Van Cortlandt, of an old colonial family, which held its manorial residence at the mouth of the Croton. With his

regiment he kept a dragon watch along the eastern shore of the Tappan Sea and Haverstraw Bay; while equal vigilance was maintained night and day along the western shore, from Nyack quite up to the Dunderberg, by Colonel Hay and his regiment of Haverstraw. Sheep and cattle were driven inland, out of the reach of maraud. Sentinels were posted to keep a lookout from heights and headlands, and give the alarm should any boats approach the shore; and rustic marksmen were ready to assemble in a moment, and give them a warm reception.

The ships of war which caused this alarm and turmoil, lay quietly anchored in the broad expanses of the Tappan Sea and Haverstraw Bay; shifting their ground occasionally, and keeping out of musket shot of the shore, apparently sleeping in the summer sunshine, with awnings stretched above their decks; while their boats were out taking soundings quite up to the Highlands, evidently preparing for further operations. At night, too, their barges were heard rowing up and down the river on mysterious errands; perriaugers, also, paid them furtive visits occasionally; it was surmised, with communications and supplies from tories on shore.

While the ships were anchored in Haverstraw

Bay, one of the tenders stood into the Bay of Peekskill, and beat up within long shot of Fort Montgomery, where General George Clinton was ensconced with six hundred of the militia of Orange and Ulster counties. As the tender approached, a thirty-two pounder was brought to range upon her. The ball passed through her quarter; whereupon she put about, and ran round the point of the Dunderberg, where the boat landed, plundered a solitary house at the foot of the mountain, and left it in flames. The marauders, on their way back to the ships, were severely galled by rustic marksmen, from a neighboring promontory.

The ships, now acquainted with the channel, moved up within six miles of Fort Montgomery. General Clinton apprehended they might mean to take advantage of a dark night, and slip by him in the deep shadows of the mountains. The shores were high and bold, the river was deep, the navigation of course safe and easy. Once above the Highlands, they might ravage the country beyond, and destroy certain vessels of war which were being constructed at Poughkeepsie.

To prevent this, he stationed a guard at night on the farthest point in view, about two miles and a half below the fort, prepared to kindle a blazing fire should the ships appear in

sight. Large piles of dry brushwood mixed with combustibles, were prepared at various places up and down the shore opposite to the fort, and men stationed to set fire to them as soon as a signal should be given from the lower point. The fort, therefore, while it remained in darkness, would have a fair chance with its batteries as the ships passed between it and these conflagrations.

A private committee sent up by the New York Convention, had a conference with the general, to devise further means of obstructing the passage of ships up the river. Fire rafts were to be brought from Poughkeepsie and kept at hand ready for action. These were to be lashed two together, with chains, between old sloops filled with combustibles, and sent down with a strong wind and tide, to drive upon the ships. An iron chain, also, was to be stretched obliquely across the river from Fort Montgomery to the foot of Anthony's Nose, thus, as it were, chaining up the gate of the Highlands.

For a protection below the Highlands, it was proposed to station whale-boats about the coves and promontories of Tappan Sea and Haverstraw Bay; to reconnoiter the enemy, cruise about at night, carry intelligence from post to post, seize any craft that might bring the ships supplies, and cut off their boats when attempt-

The Van Cortlandt Mansion—Croton River.

Redrawn from an old print.

Chapter XIII.

Question of Command between Gates and Schuyler—Condition of the Army at Crown Point—Discontent and Departure of Sullivan—Fortifications at Ticonderoga—The Question of Command Adjusted—Secret Discontents—Sectional Jealousies in the Army—Southern Troops—Smallwood's Macaroni Battalion—Connecticut Light-Horse.

WHILE the security of the Hudson from invading ships was claiming the attention of Washington, he was equally anxious to prevent an irruption of the enemy from Canada. He was grieved, therefore, to find there was a clashing of authorities between the generals who had charge of the Northern frontier. Gates, on his way to take command of the army in Canada, had heard with surprise in Albany, of its retreat across the New York frontier. He still considered it under his orders, and was proceeding to act accordingly; when General Schuyler

observed, that the resolution of Congress, and the instructions of Washington, applied to the army only while in Canada; the moment it retreated within the limits of New York, it came within his (Schuyler's) command. A letter from Schuyler to Washington, written at the time, says: "If Congress intended that General Gates should command the Northern army, wherever it may be, as he assures me they did, it ought to have been signified to me, and I should then have immediately resigned the command to him; but until such intention is properly conveyed to me, I never can. I must, therefore, entreat your Excellency to lay this letter before Congress, that they may clearly and explicitly signify their intentions, to avert the dangers and evils that may arise from a disputed command."

That there might be no delay in the service at this critical juncture, the two generals agreed to refer the question of command to Congress, and in the meantime to act in concert. They accordingly departed together for Lake Champlain, to prepare against an anticipated invasion by Sir Guy Carleton. They arrived at Crown Point on the 6th of July, and found there the wrecks of the army recently driven out of Canada. They had been harassed in their retreat by land; their transportation on the lake had

been in leaky boats, without awnings, where the sick, suffering from small-pox, lay on straw, exposed to a burning July sun; no food but salt pork, often rancid, hard biscuit or unbaked flour, and scarcely any medicine. Not more than six thousand men had reached Crown Point, and half of those were on the sick list; the shattered remains of twelve or fifteen very fine battalions. Some few were sheltered in tents, some under sheds, and others in huts hastily formed of bushes; scarce one of which but contained a dead or dying man. Two thousand eight hundred were to be sent to a hospital recently established at the south end of Lake George, a distance of fifty miles; when they were gone, with those who were to row them in boats, there would remain but the shadow of an army.*

In a council of war, it was determined that, under present circumstances, the post of Crown Point was not tenable; neither was it capable of being made so this summer, without a force greatly superior to any they might reasonably expect; and that, therefore, it was expedient to fall back, and take a strong position at Ticonderoga.

General Sullivan had been deeply hurt that

* Col. John Trumbull's *Autobiography*, p. 285, Appendix.

Gates, his former inferior in rank, should have been appointed over him to the command of the army in Canada; considering it a tacit intimation that Congress did not esteem him competent to the trust which had devolved upon him. He now, therefore, requested leave of absence, in order to wait on the commander-in-chief. It was granted with reluctance. Before departing, he communicated to the army, through General Schuyler, his high and grateful sense of their exertions in securing a retreat from Canada, and the cheerfulness with which his commands had been received and obeyed.

On the 9th of July, Schuyler and Gates returned to Ticonderoga, accompanied by Arnold. Instant arrangements were made to encamp the troops, and land the artillery and stores as fast as they should arrive. Great exertions, also, were made to strengthen the defenses of the place. Colonel John Trumbull, who was to have accompanied Gates to Canada, as adjutant-general, had been reconnoitering the neighborhood of Ticonderoga, and had pitched upon a place for a fortification on the eastern side of the lake, directly opposite the east point of Ticonderoga, where Fort Independence was subsequently built. He also advised the erection of a work on a lofty

eminence, the termination of a mountain ridge, which separates Lake George from Lake Champlain. His advice was unfortunately disregarded. The eminence, subsequently called Mount Defiance, looked down upon and commanded the narrow parts of both lakes. We shall hear more of it hereafter.

Preparations were made, also, to augment the naval force on the lakes. Ship carpenters from the Eastern States were employed at Skenesborough, to build the hulls of galleys and boats, which, when launched, were to be sent down to Ticonderoga for equipment and armament, under the superintendence of General Arnold.

Schuyler soon returned to Albany, to superintend the general concerns of the Northern department. He was indefatigable in procuring and forwarding the necessary materials and artillery for the fortification of Ticonderoga.

The question of command between him and Gates was apparently at rest. A letter from the President of Congress, dated July 8th, informed General Gates, that according to the resolution of that body under which he had been appointed, his command was totally independent of General Schuyler, *while the army was in Canada*, but no longer. Congress had

no design to divest General Schuyler of the command while the troops were *on this side of Canada.*

To Schuyler, under the same date, the president writes: "The Congress highly approve of your patriotism and magnanimity in not suffering any difference of opinion to hurt the public service.

"A mutual confidence and good understanding are at this time essentially necessary, so that I am persuaded they will take place on all occasions between yourself and General Gates."

Gates professed himself entirely satisfied with the explanation he had received, and perfectly disposed to obey the commands of Schuyler. "I am confident," added he, "we shall, as the Congress wish, go hand in hand to promote the public welfare."

Schuyler, too, assured both Congress and Washington, "that the difference in opinion between Gates and himself had not caused the least ill-will, nor interrupted that harmony necessary to subsist between their officers."

Samuel Adams, however, who was at that time in Congress, had strong doubts in the matter.

"Schuyler and Gates are to command the troops," writes he, "the former while they

are without, the latter while they are within the bounds of Canada. Admitting these generals to have the accomplishments of a Marlborough, or a Eugene, I cannot conceive that such a disposition of them will be attended with any good effects, unless harmony subsists between them. Alas, I fear this is not the case. Already disputes have arisen, which they have referred to Congress; and, although they affect to treat each other with a politeness becoming their rank, in my mind, altercations between commanders who have pretentions nearly equal (I mean in point of command), forebode a repetition of misfortune. I sincerely wish my apprehensions may prove groundless." *

We have a letter before us, also, written to Gates, by his friend Joseph Trumbull, commissary-general, on whose appointment of a deputy, the question of command had arisen. Trumbull's letter was well calculated to inflame the jealousy of Gates. "I find you are in a cursed situation," writes he; "your authority at an end; and commanded by a person who will be willing to have you knocked in the head, as General Montgomery was, if he can have the money chest in his power."

* S. Adams to R. H. Lee. *Am. Archives*, 5th Series, i., 347.

Governor Trumbull, too, the father of the commissary-general, observes subsequently: "It is justly to be expected that General Gates is discontented with his situation, finding himself limited and removed from the command, to be a wretched spectator of the ruin of the army, without power of attempting to save them."* We shall have frequent occasion hereafter to notice the discord in the service caused by this rankling discontent.

As to General Sullivan, who repaired to Philadelphia and tendered his resignation, the question of rank which had aggrieved him was explained in a manner that induced him to continue in service. It was universally allowed that his retreat had been ably conducted through all kinds of difficulties and disasters.

A greater source of solicitude to Washington than this jealousy between commanders, was the sectional jealousy springing up among the troops. In a letter to Schuyler (July 17th), he says: "I must entreat your attention to do away with the unhappy and pernicious distinctions and jealousies between the troops of different governments. Enjoin this upon the officers, and let them inculcate and press home to the soldiery, the necessity of order and harmony among those who are embarked in one

* Governor Trumbull to Mr. William Williams.

common cause, and mutually contending for all that freemen hold dear."

Nowhere were these sectional jealousies more prevalent than in the motley army assembled from distant quarters under Washington's own command. Reed, the adjutant-general, speaking on this subject, observes: "The Southern troops, comprising the regiments south of the Delaware, looked with very unkind feelings on those of New England; especially those from Connecticut, whose peculiarities of deportment made them the objects of ill-disguised derision among their fellow-soldiers." *

Among the troops thus designated as Southern, were some from Virginia, under a Major Leitch; others from Maryland, under Colonel Smallwood; others from Delaware, led by Colonel Haslet. There were four continental battalions from Pennsylvania, commanded by Colonels Shee, St. Clair, Wayne, and Magaw; and provincial battalions, two of which were severally commanded by Colonels Miles and Atlee. The continental battalion under Colonel Shee, was chiefly from the city of Philadelphia, especially the officers; among whom were Lambert Cadwalader and William Allen, members of two of the principal and most aristocratic families, and Alexander Graydon, to

* *Life of Reed*, vol. i., p. 239.

whose memoirs we are indebted for some graphic pictures of the times.

These Pennsylvania troops were under the command of Brigadier-General Mifflin, who, in the preceding year, had acted as Washington's aide-de-camp, and afterwards as quartermaster-general. His townsman and intimate, Graydon, characterizes him as a man of education and cultivated manners, with a great talent at haranguing; highly animated in his appearance, full of activity and apparently of fire; but rather too much of a bustler, harassing his men unnecessarily. "He assumed," adds Graydon, "a little of the veteran, from having been before Boston." His troops were chiefly encamped near King's Bridge, and employed in constructing works at Fort Washington.

Smallwood's Maryland battalion was one of the brightest in point of equipment. The scarlet and buff uniforms of those Southerners contrasted vividly with the rustic attire of the yeoman battalions from the East. Their officers, too, looked down upon their Connecticut compeers, who could only be distinguished from their men by wearing a cockade. "There were none," says Graydon, "by whom an unofficer-like appearance and deportment could be tolerated less than by a city-bred Marylander; who, at this time, was distinguished

by the most fashionably cut coat, the most *macaroni* cocked-hat, and hottest blood in the Union." Alas, for the homespun-clad officers from Connecticut River!

The Pennsylvania regiment under Shee, according to Graydon, promoted balls and other entertainments, in contradistinction to the fast-days and sermons borrowed from New England. There was nothing of the puritanical spirit among the Pennsylvania soldiery.

In the same sectional spirit, he speaks of the Connecticut light-horse: "Old-fashioned men, truly irregulars; whether their clothing, equipments, or caparisons were regarded, it would have been difficult to have discovered any circumstance of uniformity. Instead of carbines and sabres, they generally carried fowling-pieces, some of them very long, such as in Pennsylvania are used for shooting ducks. Here and there one appeared in a dingy regimental of scarlet, with a triangular, tarnished, laced hat. These singular dragoons were volunteers, who came to make a tender of their services to the commander-in-chief. But they stayed not long in New York. As such a body of cavalry had not been counted upon, there was in all probability a want of forage for their *jades*, which, in the spirit of ancient knighthood, they absolutely refused to descend from;

and as the general had no use for cavaliers in his insular operations, they were forthwith dismissed, with suitable acknowledgments for their truly chivalrous ardor." *

The troops thus satirized, were a body of between four and five hundred Connecticut light-horse, under Colonel Thomas Seymour. On an appeal for aid to the governor of their State, they had voluntarily hastened on in advance of the militia, to render the most speedy succor. Supposing, from the suddenness and urgency of the call upon their services, that they were immediately to be called into action and promptly to return home, they had come off in such haste, that many were unprovided even with a blanket or a change of clothing.

Washington speaks of them as being for the most part, if not all, men of reputation and property. They were, in fact, mostly farmers. As to their sorry *jades*, they were rough country horses, such as farmers keep, not for show, but service. As to their dingy regimentals, we quote a word in their favor from a writer of that day. "Some of these worthy soldiers assisted in their present uniforms at the reduction of Louisburg, and their 'lank cheeks and war-worn coats' are viewed with more veneration by their honest countrymen, than if they

* Graydon's *Memoirs*, p. 155.

were glittering nabobs from India, or bashaws with nine tails." *

On arriving, their horses, from scarcity of forage, had to be pastured about King's Bridge. In fact, Washington informed them that, under present circumstances, they could not be of use as horsemen; on which they concluded to stay, and do duty on foot till the arrival of the new levies.† In a letter to Governor Trumbull (July 11th), Washington observes: "The officers and men of that corps have manifested so firm an attachment to the cause we are engaged in, that they have consented to remain here, till such a body of troops are marched from your colony as will be a sufficient reinforcement, so as to admit of their leaving this city with safety. . . . They have the additional merit of determining to stay, even if they are obliged to maintain their horses at their own expense."‡

In a very few days, however, the troopers on being requested to mount guard like other soldiers, grew restless and uneasy. Colonel Seymour and his brother field-officers, therefore, addressed a note to Washington, stating that, by the positive laws of Connecticut, the light-horse were expressly exempted from staying in

* *Am. Archives*, 5th Series, i., 175.

† Webb to Gov. Trumbull.

‡ *Am. Archives*, 5th Series, i., 192.

garrison, or doing duty on foot, apart from their horses; and that they found it impossible to detain their men any longer under that idea, they having come "without the least expectation or preparation for such services." They respectfully, therefore, asked a dismission in form. Washington's brief reply shows that he was nettled by their conduct.

"GENTLEMEN,—In answer to yours of this date, I can only repeat to you what I said last night, and that is, that if your men think themselves exempt from the common duty of a soldier—will not mount guard, do garrison duty, or service separate from their horses—they can no longer be of any use here, where horses cannot be brought to action, and I do not care how soon they are dismissed."

In fact, the assistance of these troops was much needed; yet he apprehended the exemption from fatigue and garrison duty which they demanded as a right, would, if granted, set a dangerous example to others, and be productive of many evil consequences.

In the hurry of various concerns, he directed his aide-de-camp, Colonel Webb, to write in his name to Governor Trumbull on the subject.

Colonel Seymour, on his return home, addressed a long letter to the governor explana-

tory of his conduct. "I can't help remarking to your Honor," adds he, "that it may with truth be said, General Washington is a gentleman of extreme care and caution: that his requisitions for men are fully equal to the necessities of the case. . . . I should have stopped here, but am this moment informed that Mr. Webb, General Washington's aide-de-camp, has written to your Honor something dishonorable to the light-horse. Whatever it may be I know not, but this I do know, that it is a general observation both in camp and country, if the butterflies and coxcombs were away from the army, we should not be put to so much difficulty in obtaining men of common sense to engage in the defense of their country." *

As to the Connecticut infantry which had been furnished by Governor Trumbull in the present emergency, they likewise were substantial farmers, whose business, he observed, would require their return, when the necessity of their further stay in the army should be over. They were all men of simple rural manners, from an agricultural State, where great equality of condition prevailed; the officers were elected by the men out of their own ranks, they were their own neighbors, and every way

* *Am. Archives*, 5th Series, i., 513.

their equals. All this, as yet, was but little understood or appreciated by the troops from the South, among whom military rank was more defined and tenaciously observed, and where the officers were men of the cities, and of aristocratic habits.

We have drawn out from contemporary sources these few particulars concerning the sectional jealousies thus early springing up among the troops from the different States, to show the difficulties with which Washington had to contend at the outset, and which formed a growing object of solicitude throughout the rest of his career.

John Adams, speaking of the violent passions, and discordant interests at work throughout the country, from Florida to Canada, observes: "It requires more serenity of temper, a deeper understanding, and more courage than fell to the lot of Marlborough, to ride in this whirlwind."*

* *Am. Archives*, 4th Series, v., 1112.

Chapter XIV.

Southern Cruise of Sir Henry Clinton—Fortifications at Charleston—Arrival there of General Lee—Battle at Sullivan's Island—Washington Announces the Result to the Army.

LETTERS from General Lee gave Washington intelligence of the fate of Sir Henry Clinton's expedition to the South; that expedition which had been the subject of so much surmise and perplexity. Sir Henry in his cruise along the coast had been repeatedly foiled by Lee. First, as we have shown, when he looked in at New York; next, when he paused at Norfolk in Virginia; and lastly, when he made a bold attempt at Charleston in South Carolina; for scarce did his ships appear off the bar of the harbor, than the omnipresent Lee was marching his troops into the city.

Within a year past, Charleston had been fortified at various points. Fort Johnson, on

James Island, three miles from the city, and commanding the breadth of the channel, was garrisoned by a regiment of South Carolina regulars under Colonel Gadsden. A strong fort had recently been constructed nearly opposite, on the southwest point of Sullivan's Island, about six miles below the city. It was mounted with twenty-six guns, and garrisoned by three hundred and seventy-five regulars and a few militia, and commanded by Colonel William Moultrie of South Carolina, who had constructed it. This fort, in connection with that on James Island was considered the key of the harbor.

Cannon had also been mounted on Haddrell's Point on the mainland, to the northwest of Sullivan's Island, and along the bay in front of the town.

The arrival of General Lee gave great joy to the people of Charleston, from his high reputation for military skill and experience. According to his own account in a letter to Washington, the town on his arrival was "utterly defenseless." He was rejoiced, therefore, when the enemy, instead of immediately attacking it, directed his whole force against the fort on Sullivan's Island. "He has lost an opportunity," said Lee, "such as I hope will never occur again, of taking the town."

The British ships, in fact, having passed the bar with some difficulty, landed their troops on Long Island, situated to the east of Sullivan's Island, and separated from it by a small creek called the Breach. Sir Henry Clinton meditated a combined attack with his land and naval forces on the fort commanded by Moultrie; the capture of which, he thought, would insure the reduction of Charleston.

The Americans immediately threw up works on the northeastern extremity of Sullivan's Island, to prevent the passage of the enemy over the Breach, stationing a force of regulars and militia there, under Colonel Thompson. General Lee encamped on Haddrell's Point, on the mainland, to the north of the island, whence he intended to keep up a communication by a bridge of boats, so as to be ready at any moment to aid either Moultrie or Thompson.

Sir Henry Clinton, on the other hand, had to construct batteries on Long Island, to oppose those of Thompson, and cover the passage of his troops by boats or by the ford. Thus time was consumed, and the enemy were, from the 1st to the 28th of June, preparing for the attack; their troops suffering from the intense heat of the sun on the burning sands of Long Island, and both fleet and army complaining of brackish water and scanty and bad provisions.

Defence of Fort Moultrie.

From a painting by F. A. Otto.

Byrd (who is a lad of magnanimous courage), to pass over in a small canoe, and report the state of the spirit of the garrison. If it had been low, I should have abandoned all thoughts of defense. His report was flattering. I then determined to maintain the post at all risks, and passed the creek or cove in a small boat, in order to animate the garrison in *propria personâ;* but I found they had no occasion for such an encouragement.

"They were pleased with my visit, and assured me they never would abandon the post but with their lives. The cool courage they displayed astonished and enraptured me, for I do assure you, my dear general, I never experienced a better fire. Twelve full hours it was continued without intermission. The noble fellows who were mortally wounded, conjured their brethren never to abandon the standard of liberty. Those who lost their limbs deserted not their posts. Upon the whole, they acted like Romans in the third century."

Much of the foregoing is corroborated by the statement of a British historian. "While the continued fire of our ships," writes he, "seemed sufficient to shake the fierceness of the bravest enemy, and daunt the courage of the most veteran soldier, the return made by the fort could not fail calling for the respect, as well as

of highly incommoding the brave seamen of Britain. In the midst of that dreadful roar of artillery, they stuck with the greatest constancy and firmness to their guns; fired deliberately and slowly, and took a cool and effective aim. The ships suffered accordingly; they were torn almost to pieces, and the slaughter was dreadful. Never did British valor shine more conspicuous, and never did our marine in an engagement of the same nature with any foreign enemy experience so rude an encounter." *

The fire from the ships did not produce the expected effect. The fortifications were low, composed of earth and palmetto wood, which is soft, and makes no splinters, and the merlons were extremely thick. At one time there was a considerable pause in the American fire, and the enemy thought the fort was abandoned. It was only because the powder was exhausted. As soon as a supply could be forwarded from the mainland by General Lee, the fort resumed its fire with still more deadly effect. Through unskilful pilotage, several of the ships ran aground, where one, the frigate *Actæon*, remained; the rest were extricated with difficulty. Those which bore the brunt of the

* *Hist. Civil War in America.* Dublin, 1779. *Annual Register.*

action were much cut up. One hundred and seventy-five men were killed, and nearly as many wounded. Captain Scott, commanding the *Experiment*, of fifty guns, lost an arm, and was otherwise wounded. Captain Morris, commanding the *Actæon*, was slain. So also was Lord Campbell, late governor of the province, who served as a volunteer on board of the squadron.

Sir Henry Clinton, with two thousand troops and five or six hundred seamen, attempted repeatedly to cross from Long Island, and cooperate in the attack upon the fort, but was as often foiled by Colonel Thompson, with his battery of two cannons, and a body of South Carolina rangers and North Carolina regulars. "Upon the whole," says Lee, "the South and North Carolina troops and Virginia rifle battalion we have here, are admirable soldiers."

The combat slackened before sunset, and ceased before ten o'clock. Sir Peter Parker, who had received a severe contusion in the engagement, then slipped his cables, and drew off his shattered ships to Five Fathom Hole. The *Actæon* remained aground.

On the following morning Sir Henry Clinton made another attempt to cross from Long Island to Sullivan's Island; but was again repulsed, and obliged to take shelter behind his

breastworks. Sir Peter Parker, too, giving up all hope of reducing the fort in the shattered condition of his ships, ordered that the *Actæon* should be set on fire and abandoned. The crew left her in flames, with the guns loaded, and the colors flying. The Americans boarded her in time to haul down her colors, and secure them as a trophy, discharge her guns at one of the enemy's ships, and load three boats with stores. They then abandoned her to her fate, and in half an hour she blew up.

Within a few days the troops were re-embarked from Long Island; the attempt upon Charleston was for the present abandoned, and the fleet once more put to sea.

In this action, one of the severest in the whole course of the war, the loss of the Americans in killed and wounded, was but thirty-five men. Colonel Moultrie derived the greatest glory from the defense of Sullivan's Island; though the thanks of Congress were voted as well to General Lee, Colonel Thompson, and those under their command.

"For God's sake, my dear general," writes Lee to Washington, "urge the Congress to furnish me with a thousand cavalry. With a thousand cavalry I could insure the safety of these Southern provinces; and without cavalry, I can answer for nothing. From want of

this species of troops we had infallibly lost this capital, but the dilatoriness and stupidity of the enemy saved us."

The tidings of this signal repulse of the enemy came most opportunely to Washington, when he was apprehending an attack upon New York. He writes in a familiar vein to Schuyler on the subject. "Sir Peter Parker and his fleet got a severe drubbing in an attack upon our works on Sullivan's Island, just by Charleston in South Carolina; a part of their troops, at the same time, in attempting to land, were repulsed." He assumed a different tone in announcing it to the army in a general order of the 21st July. "This generous example of our troops under the like circumstances with us, the general hopes, will animate every officer and soldier to imitate, and even outdo them, when the enemy shall make the same attempt on us. With such a bright example before us of what can be done by brave men fighting in defense of their country, we shall be loaded with a double share of shame and infamy if we do not acquit ourselves with courage, and manifest a determined resolution to conquer or die."

Chapter XV.

Putnam's Military Projects—Chevaux-de-Frise at Fort Washington—Meditated Attack on Staten Island—Arrival of Ships—Hessian Reinforcements—Scotch Highlanders—Sir Henry Clinton and Lord Cornwallis—Putnam's Obstructions of the Hudson—The *Phœnix* and *Rose* Attacked by Row Galleys at Tarrytown—General Order of Washington on the Subject of Sectional Jealousies—Profane Swearing Prohibited in the Camp—Preparations against Attack—Levies of Yeomanry—George Clinton in Command of the Levies along the Hudson—Alarms of the People of New York—Benevolent Sympathy of Washington—The *Phœnix* Grappled by a Fire-Ship—The Ships Evacuate the Hudson.

GENERAL PUTNAM, beside his bravery in the field, was somewhat of a mechanical projector. The batteries at Fort Washington had proved ineffectual in opposing the passage of hostile ships up the Hudson. He was now engaged on a plan for obstructing the channel opposite

the fort, so as to prevent the passing of any more ships. A letter from him to General Gates (July 26th) explains his project. "We are preparing chevaux-de-frise, at which we make great despatch by the help of ships, which are to be sunk—a scheme of mine which you may be assured is very simple; a plan of which I send you. The two ships' sterns lie towards each other, about seventy feet apart. Three large logs, which reach from ship to ship, are fastened to them. The two ships and logs stop the river two hundred and eighty feet. The ships are to be sunk, and when hauled down on one side, the pricks will be raised to a proper height, and they must inevitably stop the river, if the enemy will let us sink them."

It so happened that one Ephraim Anderson, adjutant to the second Jersey battalion, had recently submitted a project to Congress for destroying the enemy's fleet in the harbor of New York. He had attempted an enterprise of the kind against the British ships in the harbor of Quebec during the siege, and, according to his own account, would have succeeded, had not the enemy discovered his intentions, and stretched a cable across the mouth of the harbor, and had he not accidentally been much burnt.

His scheme was favorably entertained by Congress, and Washington, by a letter dated July 10th, was instructed to aid him in carrying it into effect. Anderson, accordingly, was soon at work at New York constructing fire-ships, with which the fleet was to be attacked. Simultaneous with the attack, a descent was to be made on the British camp on Staten Island, from the nearest point of the Jersey shore, by troops from Mercer's flying camp, and by others stationed at Bergen under Major Knowlton, Putnam's favorite officer for daring enterprises.

Putnam entered into the scheme as zealously as if it had been his own. Indeed, by the tenor of his letter to Gates, already quoted, he seemed almost to consider it so. "The enemy's fleet," writes he, "now lies in the bay, close under Staten Island. Their troops possess no land here but the Island. Is it not strange that those invincible troops, who were to lay waste all this country with their fleets and army, are so fond of islands and peninsulas, and dare not put their feet on the main? But I hope, by the blessing of God, and good friends, we shall pay them a visit on their island. For that end we are preparing fourteen fire-ships to go into their fleet, some of which are ready charged and fitted to sail, and I hope soon to have them all fixed."

Anderson, also, on the 31st July, writes from New York to the President of Congress: "I have been for some time past very assiduous in the preparation of fire-ships. Two are already complete, and hauled off into the stream; two more will be off to-morrow, and the residue in a very short time. In my next, I hope to give you a particular account of a general conflagration, as everything in my power shall be exerted for the demolition of the enemy's fleet. I expect to take an active part, and be an instrument for that purpose. I am determined (God willing) to make a conspicuous figure among them, by being a 'burning and shining light,' and thereby serve my country, and have the honor of meeting the approbation of Congress." *

Projectors are subject to disappointments. It was impossible to construct a sufficient number of fire-ships and galleys in time. The flying camp, too, recruited but slowly, and scarcely exceeded three thousand men; the combined attack by fire and sword had therefore to be given up, and the "burning and shining light" again failed of conflagration.

Still, a partial night attack on the Staten Island encampment was concerted by Mercer and Knowlton, and twice attempted. On one

* *Am. Archives*, 5th Series, i., 155.

occasion they were prevented from crossing the strait by tempestuous weather, on another by deficiency of boats.

In the course of a few days arrived a hundred sail, with large reinforcements, among which were one thousand Hessians, and as many more were reported to be on the way. The troops were disembarked on Staten Island, and fortifications thrown up on some of the most commanding hills.

All projects of attack upon the enemy were now out of the question. Indeed, some of Washington's ablest advisers questioned the policy of remaining in New York, where they might be entrapped as the British had been in Boston. Reed, the adjutant-general, observed that, as the communication by the Hudson was interrupted, there was nothing now to keep them at New York but a mere point of honor; in the meantime, they endangered the loss of the army and its military stores. Why should they risk so much in defending a city, while the greater part of its inhabitants were plotting their destruction? His advice was, that, when they could defend the city no longer, they should evacuate and burn it, and retire from Manhattan Island; should avoid any general action, or indeed any action, unless in view of great advantages; and should make it a war of posts.

During the latter part of July, and the early part of August, ships of war with their tenders continued to arrive, and Scotch Highlanders, Hessians, and other troops to be landed on Staten Island. At the beginning of August, the squadron with Sir Henry Clinton, recently repulsed at Charleston, anchored in the bay. "His coming," writes Colonel Reed, "was as unexpected as if he had dropped from the clouds." He was accompanied by Lord Cornwallis, and brought three thousand troops.

In the meantime, Putnam's contrivances for obstructing the channel had reached their destined place. A letter dated Fort Washington, August 3d, says: "Four ships chained and boomed, with a number of amazing large chevaux-de-frise, were sunk close by the fort under command of General Mifflin, which fort mounts thirty-two pieces of heavy cannon. We are thoroughly sanguine that they [the ships up the river] never will be able to join the British fleet, nor assistance from the fleet be afforded to them; so that we may set them down as our own."

Another letter, written at the same date from Tarrytown, on the borders of the Tappan Sea, gives an account of an attack made by six row galleys upon the *Phœnix* and the *Rose*. They fought bravely for two hours, hulling the ships

repeatedly, but sustaining great damage in return ; until their commodore, Colonel Tupper, gave the signal to draw off. "Never," says the writer, "did men behave with more firm, determined spirit, than our little crews. One of our tars being mortally wounded, cried to his companions : 'I am a dying man ; revenge my blood, my boys, and carry me alongside my gun, that I may die there.' We were so preserved by a gracious Providence, that in all our galleys we had but two men killed and fourteen wounded, two of which are thought dangerous. We hope to have another touch at those pirates before they leave our river ; which God prosper !"

Such was the belligerent spirit prevailing up the Hudson.

The force of the enemy collected in the neighborhood of New York was about thirty thousand men ; that of the Americans a little more than seventeen thousand, but was subsequently increased to twenty thousand, for the most part raw and undisciplined. One fourth were on the sick-list with bilious and putrid fevers and dysentery ; others were absent on furlough or command ; the rest had to be distributed over posts and stations fifteen miles apart.

The sectional jealousies prevalent among

them were more and more a subject of uneasiness to Washington. In one of his general orders he observes: "It is with great concern that the general understands that jealousies have arisen among the troops from the different provinces, and reflections are frequently thrown out which can only tend to irritate each other, and injure the noble cause in which we are engaged, and which we ought to support with one hand and one heart. The general most earnestly entreats the officers and soldiers to consider the consequences; that they can no way assist our enemies more effectually than by making divisions among ourselves; that the honor and success of the army, and the safety of our bleeding country, depend upon harmony and good agreement with each other; that the provinces are all united to oppose the common enemy, and all distinctions sunk in the name of an American. To make this name honorable, and to preserve the liberty of our country, ought to be our only emulation; and he will be the best soldier and the best patriot, who contributes most to this glorious work, whatever be his station, or from whatever part of the continent he may come. Let all distinction of nations, countries, and provinces, therefore, be lost in the generous contest, who shall behave with the most courage against the

enemy, and the most kindness and good-humor to each other. If there be any officers or soldiers so lost to virtue and a love of their country, so as to continue in such practices after this order, the general assures them, and is authorized by Congress to declare to the whole army, that such persons shall be severely punished, and dismissed from the service with disgrace."

The urgency of such a general order is apparent in that early period of our confederation, when its various parts had not as yet been sufficiently welded together to acquire a thorough feeling of nationality; yet what an enduring lesson does it furnish for every stage of our Union!

We subjoin another of the general orders issued in this time of gloom and anxiety:

"That the troops may have an opportunity of attending public worship, as well as to take some rest after the great fatigue they have gone through, the general, in future, excuses them from fatigue duty on Sundays, except at the ship-yards, or on special occasions, until further orders. The general is sorry to be informed, that the foolish and wicked practice of profane cursing and swearing, a vice heretofore little known in an American army, is growing into fashion. He hopes the officers

will, by example as well as influence, endeavor to check it, and that both they and the men will reflect, that we can little hope of the blessing of Heaven on our arms, if we insult it by our impiety and folly. Added to this, it is a vice so mean and low, without any temptation, that every man of sense and character detests and despises it." *

While Washington thus endeavored to elevate the minds of his soldiery to the sanctity of the cause in which they were both engaged, he kept the most watchful eye upon the movements of the enemy. Beside their great superiority in point of numbers as well as discipline, to his own crude and scanty legions, they possessed a vast advantage in their fleet. "They would not be half the enemy they are," observed Colonel Reed, "if they were once separated from their ships." Every arrival and departure of these, therefore, was a subject of speculation and conjecture. Aaron Burr, at that time in New York, aide-de-camp to General Putnam, speaks in a letter to an uncle, of thirty transports, which, under convoy of three frigates, had put to sea on the 7th of August, with the intention of sailing round Long Island and coming through the Sound, and thus investing

* Orderly Book, Aug. 3d, as cited by Sparks. *Writings of Washington*, vol. iv., p. 28.

the city by the North and East Rivers. "They are then to land on both sides of the island," writes he, "join their forces, and draw a line across, which will hem us in, and totally cut off all communication; after which, they will have their own fun." He adds: "They hold us in the utmost contempt. Talk of forcing all our lines without firing a gun. The bayonet is their pride. They have forgot Bunker's Hill." *

In this emergency, Washington wrote to General Mercer for 2,000 men from the flying camp. Colonel Smallwood's battalion was immediately furnished, as a part of them. The Convention of the State ordered out hasty levies of country militia, to form temporary camps on the shore of the Sound, and on that of the Hudson above King's Bridge, to annoy the enemy, should they attempt to land from their ships on either of these waters. Others were sent to reinforce the posts on Long Island. As King's County on Long Island was noted for being a stronghold of the disaffected, the Convention ordered that, should any of the militia of that county refuse to serve, they should be disarmed and secured, and their possessions laid waste.

Many of the yeoman of the country, thus hastily summoned from the plough, were desti-

* *Am. Archives*, 5th Series, i., 887.

tute of arms, in lieu of which they were ordered to bring with them a shovel, spade, or pickaxe, or a scythe straightened and fastened to a pole.

This rustic array may have provoked the thoughtless sneers of city scoffers, such as those cited by Graydon; but it was in truth one of the glorious features of the Revolution, to be thus aided in its emergencies by "hasty levies of husbandmen." *

* General orders, Aug. 8th, show the feverish state of affairs in the city. "As the movements of the enemy, and intelligence by deserters, give the utmost reason to believe that the great struggle in which we are contending for everything dear to us and our posterity is near at hand, the general most earnestly recommends the closest attention to the state of the men's arms, ammunition, and flints; that if we should be suddenly called to action, nothing of this kind may be to provide. And he does most anxiously exhort both officers and soldiers not to be out of their quarters or encampments, especially in the morning or upon the tide of flood.

"A flag in the daytime, or a light at night, in the fort on Bayard's Hill, with three guns from the same place fired quick but distinct, is to be considered as a signal for the troops to repair to their alarm posts, and prepare for action. And that the alarm may be more effectually given, the drums are immediately to beat to arms upon the signal being given from Bayard's Hill. This order is not to be considered as countermanding the firing two guns at Fort George, as formerly ordered. That is also to be done on an alarm, but the

By the authority of the New York Convention, Washington had appointed General George Clinton to the command of the levies on both sides of the Hudson. He now ordered him to hasten down with them to the fort just erected on the north side of King's Bridge; leaving two hundred men under the command of a brave and alert officer to throw up works at the pass of Anthony's Nose, where the main road to Albany crosses that mountain. Troops of horse also were to be posted by him along the river to watch the motions of the enemy.

Washington now made the last solemn preparations for the impending conflict. All suspected persons, whose presence might promote the plans of the enemy, were removed to a distance. All papers respecting affairs of state were put up in a large case, to be delivered to Congress. As to his domestic arrangements, Mrs. Washington had some time previously gone to Philadelphia, with the intention of returning to Virginia, as there was no prospect of her being with him any part of the summer, which threatened to be one of turmoil and danger. The other ladies, wives of general officers, who used to grace and enliven headquarters, had all been sent out of the way of

flag will not be hoisted at the old headquarters in Broadway."—*Am. Archives*, 5th Series, i., 912.

the storm which was lowering over this devoted city.

Accounts of deserters, and other intelligence, informed Washington on the 17th, that a great many of the enemy's troops had gone on board of the transports; that three days' provisions had been cooked, and other steps taken indicating an intention of leaving Staten Island. Putnam, also, came up from below with word that at least one fourth of the fleet had sailed. There were many conjectures at headquarters as to whither they were bound, or whether they had not merely shifted their station. Everything indicated, however, that affairs were tending to a crisis.

The "hysterical alarms" of the peaceful inhabitants of New York, which had provoked the soldierlike impatience and satirical sneers of Lee, inspired different sentiments in the benevolent heart of Washington, and produced the following letter to the New York Convention:

"When I consider that the city of New York will, in all human probability, very soon be the scene of a bloody conflict, I cannot but view the great numbers of women, children, and infirm persons remaining in it, with the most melancholy concern. When the men-of-war (the *Phœnix* and *Rose*) passed up the river,

the shrieks and cries of these poor creatures, running every way with their children, were truly distressing, and I fear they will have an unhappy effect upon the ears and minds of our young and inexperienced soldiery. Can no method be devised for their removal?"

How vividly does this call to mind the compassionate sensibility of his younger days, when commanding at Winchester, in Virginia, in time of public peril; and melted to "deadly sorrow" by the "supplicating tears of the women, and moving petitions of the men." As then, he listened to the prompt suggestions of his own heart; and, without awaiting the action of the Convention, issued a proclamation, advising the inhabitants to remove, and requiring the officers and soldiery to aid the helpless and the indigent. The Convention soon responded to his appeal, and appointed a committee to effect these purposes in the most humane and expeditious manner.

A gallant little exploit at this juncture, gave a fillip to the spirits of the community. Two of the fire-ships recently constructed, went up the Hudson to attempt the destruction of the ships which had so long been domineering over its waters. One succeeded in grappling the *Phœnix*, and would soon have set her in flames, but in the darkness got to leeward,

and was cast loose without effecting any damage. The other, in making for the *Rose*, fell foul of one of the tenders, grappled and burnt her. The enterprise was conducted with spirit, and though it failed of its main object, had an important effect. The commanders of the ships determined to abandon those waters, where their boats were fired upon by the very yeomanry whenever they attempted to land; and where their ships were in danger from midnight incendiaries, while riding at anchor. Taking advantage of a brisk wind and favoring tide, they made all sail early on the morning of the 18th of August, and stood down the river, keeping close under the eastern shore, where they supposed the guns from Mount Washington could not be brought to bear upon them. Notwithstanding this precaution, the *Phœnix* was thrice hulled by shots from the forts, and one of the tenders once. The *Rose*, also, was hulled once by a shot from Burdett's Ferry. The men on board were kept close, to avoid being picked off by a party of riflemen posted on the river bank. The ships fired grapeshot as they passed, but without effecting any injury. Unfortunately, a passage had been left open in the obstructions on which General Putnam had calculated so sanguinely; it was to have been closed in the course of a

day or two. Through this they made their way, guided by a deserter; which alone, in Putnam's opinion, saved them from being checked in their career, and utterly destroyed by the batteries.

Chapter XVI.

The Battle of Long Island.

THE movements of the British fleet, and of the camp on Staten Island, gave signs of a meditated attack; but, as the nature of that attack was uncertain, Washington was obliged to retain the greater part of his troops in the city for its defense, holding them ready, however, to be transferred to any point in the vicinity. General Mifflin, with about five hundred of the Pennsylvania troops, of Colonel Shee and Magaw's regiments, were at King's Bridge, ready to aid at a moment's notice. "They are the best disciplined of any troops that I have yet seen in the army," said General Heath, who had just reviewed them. General George Clinton was at that post, with about fourteen hundred of his yeomanry of the Hudson. As the *Phœnix* and *Rose* had explored

the shores, and taken the soundings as far as they had gone up the river, General Heath thought Howe might attempt an attack somewhere above King's Bridge, rather than in the face of the many and strong works erected in and around the city. "Should his inclination lead him this way," adds he, "nature has done much for us, and we shall, as fast as possible, add the strength of art. We are pushing our works with great diligence." *

Reports from different quarters, gave Washington reason to apprehend that the design of the enemy might be to land part of their force on Long Island, and endeavor to get possession of the heights of Brooklyn, which overlooked New York; while another part should land above the city, as General Heath suggested. Thus, various disconnected points, distant from each other, and a great extent of intervening country, had to be defended by raw troops, against a superior force, well disciplined, and possessed of every facility for operating by land and water.

General Greene, with a considerable force, was stationed at Brooklyn. He had acquainted himself with all the localities of the island, from Hell Gate to the Narrows, and made his plan of defense accordingly. His troops were

* Heath to Washington, Aug. 17–18.

diligently occupied in works which he laid out, about a mile beyond the village of Brooklyn, and facing the interior of the island, whence a land attack might be attempted.

Brooklyn was immediately opposite to New York. The Sound, commonly called the East River, in that place about three-quarters of a mile in width, swept its rapid tides between them. The village stood on a kind of peninsula, formed by the deep inlets of Wallabout Bay on the north, and Gowanus Cove on the south. A line of intrenchments and strong redoubts extended across the neck of the peninsula, from the bay to a swamp and creek emptying into the cove. To protect the rear of the works from the enemy's ships, a battery was erected at Red Hook, the southwest corner of the peninsula, and a fort on Governor's Island, nearly opposite.

About two miles and a half in front of the line of intrenchments and redoubts, a range of hills, densely wooded, extended from southwest to northeast, forming a natural barrier across the island. It was traversed by three roads. One, on the left of the works, stretched eastwardly to Bedford, and then by a pass through the Bedford Hills to the village of Jamaica; another, central and direct, led through the woody heights to Flatbush; a third, on

the right of the lines, passed by Gowanus Cove to the Narrows and Gravesend Bay.

The occupation of this range of hills, and the protection of its passes, had been designed by General Greene; but unfortunately, in the midst of his arduous toils, he was taken down by a raging fever, which confined him to his bed; and General Sullivan, just returned from Lake Champlain, had the temporary command.

Washington saw that to prevent the enemy from landing on Long Island would be impossible, its great extent affording so many places favorable for that purpose, and the American works being at that part opposite to New York. "However," writes he to the President of Congress, "we shall attempt to harass them as much as possible, which is all that we can do."

On the 21st came a letter, written in all haste by Brigadier-General William Livingston, of New Jersey. Movements of the enemy on Staten Island had been seen from his camp. He had sent over a spy at midnight, who brought back the following intelligence. Twenty thousand men had embarked to make an attack on Long Island, and up the Hudson. Fifteen thousand remained on Staten Island, to attack Bergen Point, Elizabethtown Point, and Amboy. The spy declared that he had heard orders read, and the conversation of the

generals. "They appear very determined," added he, "and will put all to the sword!"

Washington sent a copy of the letter to the New York Convention. On the following morning (August 22d) the enemy appeared to be carrying their plans into execution. The reports of cannon and musketry were heard from Long Island, and columns of smoke were descried rising above the groves and orchards at a distance. The city, as usual, was alarmed, and had reason to be so; for word soon came that several thousand men, with artillery and light-horse, were landed at Gravesend; and that Colonel Hand, stationed there with the Pennsylvania rifle regiment, had retreated to the lines, setting fire to stacks of wheat, and other articles, to keep them from falling into the enemy's hands.

Washington apprehended an attempt of the foe by a forced march, to surprise the lines at Brooklyn. He immediately sent over a reinforcement of six battalions. It was all that he could spare, as with the next tide the ships might bring up the residue of the army, and attack the city. Five battalions more, however, were ordered to be ready as a reinforcement, if required. "Be cool, but determined," was the exhortation given to the departing troops. "Do not fire at a distance, but wait the commands

of your officers. It is the general's express orders, that if any man attempt to skulk, lie down, or retreat without orders, he be instantly shot down for an example."

In justice to the poor fellows, most of whom were going for the first time on a service of life and death, Washington observes, that "they went off in high spirits," and that the whole capable of duty evinced the same cheerfulness.*

Nine thousand of the enemy had landed, with forty pieces of cannon. Sir Henry Clinton had the chief command, and led the first division. His associate officers were the Earls of Cornwallis and Percy, General Grant, and General Sir William Erskine. As their boats approached the shore Colonel Hand, stationed, as has been said, in the neighborhood with his rifle regiment, retreated to the chain of wooded hills, and took post on a height commanding the central road leading from Flatbush. The enemy having landed without opposition, Lord Cornwallis was detached with the reserve to Flatbush, while the rest of the army extended itself from the ferry at the Narrows through Utrecht and Gravesend to the village of Flatland.

Lord Cornwallis, with two battalions of light-infantry, Colonel Donop's corps of Hessians,

* Washington to the President of Congress.

and six field-pieces, advanced rapidly to seize upon the central pass through the hills. He found Hand and his riflemen ready to make a vigorous defense. This brought him to a halt, having been ordered not to risk an attack should the pass be occupied. He took post for the night, therefore, in the village of Flatbush.

It was evidently the aim of the enemy to force the lines at Brooklyn, and get possession of the heights. Should they succeed, New York would be at their mercy. The panic and distress of the inhabitants went on increasing. Most of those who could afford it, had already removed to the country. There was now a new cause of terror. It was rumored that, should the American army retreat from the city, leave would be given for any one to set it on fire. The New York Convention apprised Washington of this rumor. "I can assure you, gentlemen," writes he in reply, "that this report is not founded on the least authority from me. On the contrary, I am so sensible of the value of such a city, and the consequences of its destruction to many worthy citizens and their families, that nothing but the last necessity, and that such as would justify me to the whole world, would induce me to give orders to that purpose."

In this time of general alarm, headquarters

were besieged by applicants for safeguard from the impending danger; and Washington was even beset in his walks by supplicating women with their children. The patriot's heart throbbed feelingly under the soldier's belt. Nothing could surpass the patience and benignant sympathy with which he listened to them, and endeavored to allay their fears. Again he urged the Convention to carry out their measures for the removal of these defenseless beings. "There are many," writes he, "who anxiously wish to remove, but have not the means."

On the 24th he crossed over to Brooklyn, to inspect the lines and reconnoiter the neighborhood. In this visit he felt sensibly the want of General Greene's presence, to explain his plans and point out the localities.

The American advanced posts were in the wooded hills. Colonel Hand, with his riflemen, kept watch over the central road, and a strong redoubt had been thrown up in front of the pass, to check any advance of the enemy from Flatbush. Another road leading from Flatbush to Bedford, by which the enemy might get round to the left of the works at Brooklyn, was guarded by two regiments, one under Colonel Williams, posted on the north side of the ridge, the other by a Pennsylvania

rifle regiment, under Colonel Miles, posted on the south side. The enemy were stretched along the country beyond the chain of hills.

As yet, nothing had taken place but skirmishing and irregular firing between the outposts. It was with deep concern Washington noticed a prevalent disorder and confusion in the camp. There was a want of system among the officers, and co-operation among the troops, each corps seeming to act independently of the rest. Few of the men had any military experience, except, perchance, in bush-fighting with the Indians. Unaccustomed to discipline and the restraint of camps, they sallied forth whenever they pleased, singly or in squads, prowling about and firing upon the enemy, like hunters after game.

Much of this was no doubt owing to the protracted illness of General Greene.

On returning to the city, therefore, Washington gave the command on Long Island to General Putnam, warning him, however, in his letter of instructions, to summon the officers together, and enjoin them to put a stop to the irregularities which he had observed among the troops. Lines of defense were to be formed round the encampment, and works on the most advantageous ground. Guards were to be stationed on the lines, with a brigadier

of the day constantly at hand to see that orders were executed. Field-officers were to go the rounds and report the situation of the guards, and no one was to pass beyond the lines without a special permit in writing. At the same time, partisan and scouting parties, under proper officers, and with regular license, might sally forth to harass the enemy, and prevent their carrying off the horses and cattle of the country people.

Especial attention was called to the wooded hills between the works and the enemy's camp. The passes through them were to be secured by abatis, and defended by the best troops, who should, at all hazards, prevent the approach of the enemy. The militia being the least tutored and experienced, might man the interior works.

Putnam crossed with alacrity to his post. "He was made happy," writes Colonel Reed, "by obtaining leave to go over. The brave old man was quite miserable at being kept here."

In the meantime, the enemy were augmenting their forces on the island. Two brigades of Hessians, under Lieutenant-General De Heister, were transferred from the camp on Staten Island on the 25th. This movement did not escape the vigilant eye of Washington.

By the aid of his telescope, he had noticed that from time to time tents were struck on Staten Island, and portions of the encampment broken up; while ship after ship weighed anchor, and dropped down to the Narrows.

He now concluded that the enemy were about to make a push with their main force for the possession of Brooklyn Heights. He accordingly sent over additional reinforcements, and among them Colonel John Haslet's well equipped and well disciplined Delaware regiment; which was joined to Lord Stirling's brigade, chiefly composed of Southern troops, and stationed outside of the lines. These were troops which Washington regarded with peculiar satisfaction, on account of their soldier-like appearance and discipline.

On the 29th, he crossed over to Brooklyn, accompanied by Reed, the adjutant-general. There was much movement among the enemy's troops, and their number was evidently augmented. In fact, General De Heister had reached Flatbush with his Hessians, and taken command of the centre; whereupon Sir Henry Clinton, with the right wing, drew off to Flatlands, in a diagonal line to the right of De Heister, while the left wing, commanded by General Grant, extended to the place of landing on Gravesend Bay.

Washington remained all day, aiding General Putnam with his counsels, who, new to the command, had not been able to make himself well acquainted with the fortified posts beyond the lines. In the evening Washington returned to the city, full of anxious thought. A general attack was evidently at hand. Where would it be made? How would his inexperienced troops stand the encounter? What would be the defense of the city if assailed by the ships? It was a night of intense solicitude, and well might it be; for during that night a plan was carried into effect, fraught with disaster to the Americans.

The plan to which we allude was concerted by General Howe, the commander-in-chief. Sir Henry Clinton, with the vanguard, composed of the choicest troops, was by a circuitous march in the night, to throw himself into the road leading from Jamaica to Bedford, seize upon a pass through the Bedford Hills, within three miles of that village, and thus turn the left of the American advanced posts. It was preparatory to this nocturnal march, that Sir Henry during the day had fallen back with his troops from Flatbush to Flatlands, and caused that stir and movement which had attracted the notice of Washington.

To divert the attention of the Americans

from this stealthy march on their left, General Grant was to menace their right flank toward Gravesend before daybreak, and General De Heister to cannonade their centre, where Colonel Hand was stationed. Neither, however, was to press an attack until the guns of Sir Henry Clinton should give notice that he had effected his purpose, and turned the left flank of the Americans; then the latter were to be assailed at all points with the utmost vigor.

About nine o'clock in the evening of the 26th, Sir Henry Clinton began his march from Flatlands with the vanguard, composed of light infantry. Lord Percy followed with the grenadiers, artillery, and light dragoons, forming the centre. Lord Cornwallis brought up the rear-guard with the heavy ordnance. General Howe accompanied this division.

It was a silent march, without beat of drum or sound of trumpet, under guidance of a Long Island tory along by-roads traversing a swamp by a narrow causeway, and so across the country to the Jamaica road. About two hours before daybreak, they arrived within half a mile of the pass through the Bedford Hills, and halted to prepare for an attack. At this juncture they captured an American patrol, and learnt, to their surprise, that the Bedford pass was unoccupied. In fact, the

whole road beyond Bedford, leading to Jamaica, was left unguarded, excepting by some light volunteer troops. Colonels Williams and Miles, who were stationed to the left of Colonel Hand, among the wooded hills, had been instructed to send out parties occasionally to patrol the road, but no troops had been stationed at the Bedford pass. The road and pass may not have been included in General Greene's plan of defense, or may have been thought too far out of the way to need special precaution. The neglect of them, however, proved fatal.

Sir Henry Clinton immediately detached a battalion of light-infantry to secure the pass; and, advancing with his corps at the first break of day, possessed himself of the heights. He was now within three miles of Bedford, and his march had been undiscovered. Having passed the heights, therefore, he halted his division for the soldiers to take some refreshment, preparatory to the morning's hostilities.

There we will leave them, while we note how the other divisions performed their part of the plan.

About midnight General Grant moved from Gravesend Bay, with the left wing, composed of two brigades and a regiment of regulars, a battalion of New York loyalists, and ten field-pieces. He proceeded along the road leading

past the Narrows and Gowanus Cove, toward the right of the American works. A picket guard of Pennsylvanian and New York militia, under Colonel Atlee, retired before him fighting to a position on the skirts of the wooded hills.

In the meantime, scouts had brought in word to the American lines that the enemy were approaching in force upon the right. General Putnam ordered Lord Stirling to hasten with the two regiments nearest at hand, and hold them in check. These were Haslet's Delaware, and Smallwood's Maryland regiments; the latter the *macaronis*, in scarlet and buff, who had outshone, in camp, their yeoman fellow-soldiers in homespun. They turned out with great alacrity, and Stirling pushed forward with them on the road toward the Narrows. By the time he had passed Gowanus Cove, daylight began to appear. Here, on a rising ground, he met Colonel Atlee with his Pennsylvania provincials, and learned that the enemy were near. Indeed, their front began to appear in the uncertain twilight. Stirling ordered Atlee to place himself in ambush in an orchard on the left of the road, and await their coming up, while he formed the Delaware and Maryland regiments along a ridge from the road, up to a piece of woods on the top of the hill.

Atlee gave the enemy two or three volleys as they approached, and then retreated and formed in the wood on Lord Stirling's left. By this time his lordship was reinforced by Kichline's riflemen, part of whom he placed along a hedge at the foot of the hill, and part in front of the wood. General Grant threw his light troops in the advance, and posted them in an orchard and behind hedges, extending in front of the Americans, and about one hundred and fifty yards distant.

It was now broad daylight. A rattling fire commenced between the British light troops and the American riflemen, which continued for about two hours, when the former retired to their main body. In the meantime, Stirling's position had been strengthened by the arrival of Captain Carpenter with two field-pieces. These were placed on the side of the hill, so as to command the road and the approach for some hundred yards. General Grant, likewise, brought up his artillery within three hundred yards, and formed his brigade on opposite hills, about six hundred yards distant. There was occasional cannonading on both sides, but neither party sought a general action.

Lord Stirling's object was merely to hold the enemy in check ; and the instructions of

General Grant, as we have shown, were not to press an attack until aware that Sir Henry Clinton was on the left flank of the Americans.

During this time, De Heister had commenced his part of the plan by opening a cannonade from his camp at Flatbush, upon the redoubt, at the pass of the wooded hills, where Hand and his riflemen were stationed. On hearing this General Sullivan, who was within the lines, rode forth to Colonel Hand's post to reconnoiter. De Heister, however, according to the plan of operations, did not advance from Flatbush, but kept up a brisk fire from his artillery on the redoubt in front of the pass, which replied as briskly. At the same time, a cannonade from a British ship upon the battery at Red Hook, contributed to distract the attention of the Americans.

In the meantime terror reigned in New York. The volleying of musketry and the booming of cannon at early dawn, had told of the fighting that had commenced. As the morning advanced, and platoon firing and the occasional discharge of a field-piece were heard in different directions, the terror increased. Washington was still in doubt whether this was but a part of a general attack, in which the city was to be included. Five ships-of-the-line were endeavoring to beat up the bay. Were they

to cannonade the city, or to land troops above it? Fortunately, a strong head-wind baffled all their efforts; but one vessel of inferior force got up far enough to open the fire already mentioned upon the fort at Red Hook.

Seeing no likelihood of an immediate attack upon the city, Washington hastened over to Brooklyn in his barge, and galloped up to the works. He arrived there in time to witness the catastrophe for which all the movements of the enemy had been concerted.

The thundering of artillery in the direction of Bedford, had given notice that Sir Henry had turned the left of the Americans. De Heister immediately ordered Colonel Count Donop to advance with his Hessian regiment, and storm the redoubt, while he followed with his whole division. Sullivan did not remain to defend the redoubt. Sir Henry's cannon had apprised him of the fatal truth, that his flank was turned, and he in danger of being surrounded. He ordered a retreat to the lines, but it was already too late. Scarce had he descended from the height, and emerged into the plain, when he was met by the British light-infantry and dragoons, and driven back into the woods. By this time De Heister and his Hessians had come up, and now commenced a scene of confusion, consternation, and slaughter,

in which the troops under Williams and Miles were involved. Hemmed in and entrapped between the British and Hessians, and driven from one to the other, the Americans fought for a time bravely, or rather desperately. Some were cut down and trampled by the cavalry, others bayoneted without mercy by the Hessians. Some rallied in groups, and made a brief stand with their rifles from rocks or behind trees. The whole pass was a scene of carnage, resounding with the clash of arms, the tramp of horses, the volleying of fire-arms, and the cries of the combatants, with now and then the dreary braying of the trumpet. We give the words of one who mingled in the fight, and whom we have heard speak with horror of the sanguinary fury with which the Hessians plied the bayonet. At length some of the Americans, by a desperate effort, cut their way through the host of foes, and effected a retreat to the lines, fighting as they went. Others took refuge among the woods and fastnesses of the hills, but a great part were either killed or taken prisoners. Among the latter was General Sullivan.

Washington, as we have observed, arrived in time to witness this catastrophe, but was unable to prevent it. He had heard the din of the battle in the woods, and seen the smoke

rising from among the trees; but a deep column of the enemy was descending from the hills on the left; his choicest troops were all in action, and he had none but militia to man the works. His solicitude was now awakened for the safety of Lord Stirling and his corps, who had been all the morning exchanging cannonades with General Grant. The forbearance of the latter in not advancing, though so superior in force, had been misinterpreted by the Americans. According to Colonel Haslet's statement, the Delawares and Marylanders, drawn up on the side of the hill, "stood upwards of four hours, with a firm and determined countenance, in close array, their colors flying, the enemy's artillery playing on them all the while, *not daring to advance and attack them*, though six times their number, and nearly surrounding them." *

Washington saw the danger to which these brave fellows were exposed, though they could not. Stationed on a hill within the lines, he commanded, with his telescope, a view of the whole field, and saw the enemy's reserve, under Cornwallis, marching down by a cross road to get in the rear, and thus place them between two fires. With breathless anxiety he watched the result.

* Atlee to Colonel Rodney. Sparks, iv., 516.

The sound of Sir Henry Clinton's cannon apprised Stirling that the enemy was between him and the lines. General Grant, too, aware that the time had come for earnest action, was closing up, and had already taken Colonel Atlee prisoner. His lordship now thought to effect a circuitous retreat to the lines, by crossing the creek which empties into Gowanus Cove, near what was called the Yellow Mills. There was a bridge and milldam, and the creek might be forded at low water, but no time was to be lost, for the tide was rising.

Leaving part of his men to keep face towards General Grant, Stirling advanced with the rest to pass the creek, but was suddenly checked by the appearance of Cornwallis and his grenadiers.

Washington, and some of his officers on the hill, who watched every movement, had supposed that Stirling and his troops, finding the case desperate, would surrender in a body, without firing. On the contrary his lordship boldly attacked Cornwallis with half of Smallwood's battalion, while the rest of his troops retreated across the creek. Washington wrung his hands in agony at the sight. "Good God!" cried he, "what brave fellows I must this day lose!" *

* Letter from an American officer. *Am. Archives*, 5th Series, ii., 108.

It was, indeed, a desperate fight; and now Smallwood's *macaronis* showed their game spirit. They were repeatedly broken, but as often rallied, and renewed the fight. "We were on the point of driving Lord Cornwallis from his station," writes Lord Stirling, "but large reinforcements arriving, rendered it impossible to do more than provide for safety."

"Being thus surrounded, and no probability of a reinforcement," writes a Maryland officer, "his lordship ordered me to retreat with the remaining part of our men, and force our way to our camp. We soon fell in with a party of the enemy, who clubbed their firelocks, and waved their hats to us as if they meant to surrender as prisoners; but on our advancing within sixty yards, they presented their pieces and fired, which we returned with so much warmth that they soon quitted their post, and retired to a large body that was lying in ambuscade."*

The enemy rallied, and returned to the combat with additional force. Only five companies of Smallwood's battalion were now in action. There was a warm and close engagement for nearly ten minutes. The struggle became desperate on the part of the Americans. Broken and disordered, they rallied in a piece of woods,

* Letter from a Marylander. *Am. Archives*, 5th Series, i., 1232.

and made a second attack. They were again overpowered with numbers. Some were surrounded and bayoneted in a field of Indian corn; others joined their comrades who were retreating across a marsh. Lord Stirling had encouraged and animated his young soldiers by his voice and example, but when all was lost, he sought out General De Heister, and surrendered himself as his prisoner.

More than two hundred and fifty brave fellows, most of them of Smallwood's regiment, perished in this deadly struggle, within sight of the lines of Brooklyn. That part of the Delaware troops who had first crossed the creek and swamp, made good their retreat to the lines with a trifling loss, and entered the camp covered with mud and drenched with water; but bringing with them twenty-three prisoners, and their standard tattered by grape-shot.

The enemy now concentrated their forces within a few hundred yards of the redoubts. The grenadiers were within musket shot. Washington expected they would storm the works, and prepared for a desperate defense. The discharge of a cannon and volleys of musketry from the part of the lines nearest to them, seemed to bring them to a pause.

It was, in truth, the forbearance of the British commander that prevented a bloody

conflict. His troops, heated with action and flushed with success, were eager to storm the works; but he was unwilling to risk the loss of life that must attend an assault, when the object might be attained at a cheaper rate, by regular approaches. Checking the ardor of his men, therefore, though with some difficulty, he drew them off to a hollow way, in front of the lines, but out of reach of the musketry, and encamped there for the night.*

The loss of the Americans in this disastrous battle has been variously stated, but is thought, in killed, wounded, and prisoners, to have been nearly two thousand; a large number, considering that not above five thousand were engaged. The enemy acknowledged a loss of 380 killed and wounded.†

The success of the enemy was attributed, in some measure, to the doubt in which Washington was kept as to the nature of the intended attack, and at what point it would chiefly be made. This obliged him to keep a great part of his forces in New York, and to distribute those at Brooklyn over a wide extent of country, and at widely distant places. In fact, he

* General Howe to Lord G. Germaine. *Remembrancer*, iii., 347.

† Howe states the prisoners at 1,094, and computes the whole American loss at 3,300.

knew not the superior number of the enemy encamped on Long Island, a majority of them having been furtively landed in the night, some days after the debarkation of the first division.

Much of the day's disaster has been attributed, also, to a confusion in the command, caused by the illness of General Greene. Putnam, who had supplied his place in the emergency after the enemy had landed, had not time to make himself acquainted with the post, and the surrounding country. Sullivan, though in his letters he professes to have considered himself subordinate to General Putnam within the lines, seems still to have exercised somewhat of an independent command, and to have acted at his own discretion: while Lord Stirling was said to have command of all the troops outside of the works.

The fatal error, however, and one probably arising from all these causes, consisted in leaving the passes through the wooded hills too weakly fortified and guarded; and especially in neglecting the eastern road, by which Sir Henry Clinton got in the rear of the advanced troops, cut them off from the lines, and subjected them to a cross fire of his own men and De Heister's Hessians.

This able and fatal scheme o the enemy

might have been thwarted, had the army been provided with a few troops of light horse to serve as videttes. With these to scour the roads and bring intelligence, the night march of Sir Henry Clinton, so decisive of the fortunes of the day, could hardly have failed to be discovered and reported. The Connecticut horsemen, therefore, ridiculed by the Southerners for their homely equipments, sneered at as useless, and dismissed for standing on their dignity and privileges as troopers, might, if retained, have saved the army from being surprised and severed, its advanced guards routed, and those very Southern troops cut up, captured, and almost annihilated.

Chapter XVII.

The Retreat from Long Island.

THE night after the battle was a weary, yet almost sleepless one to the Americans. Fatigued, dispirited, many of them sick and wounded, yet they were, for the most part, without tent or other shelter. To Washington it was a night of anxious vigil. Everything boded a close and deadly conflict. The enemy had pitched a number of tents about a mile distant. Their sentries were but a quarter of a mile off, and close to the American sentries. At four o'clock in the morning, Washington went the round of the works, to see that all was right, and to speak words of encouragement. The morning broke lowering and dreary. Large encampments were gradually descried; to appearance, the enemy were twenty thousand strong. As the day advanced, their ordnance began to play upon the works. They were proceeding to intrench themselves,

but were driven into their tents by a drenching rain.

Early in the morning General Mifflin arrived in camp, with part of the troops which had been stationed at Fort Washington and King's Bridge. He brought with him Shee's prime Philadelphia regiment, and Magaw's Pennsylvania regiment, both well disciplined and officered, and accustomed to act together. They were so much reduced in number, however, by sickness, that they did not amount in the whole, to more than eight hundred men. With Mifflin came also Colonel Glover's Massachusetts regiment, composed chiefly of Marblehead fishermen and sailors, hardy, adroit, and weather-proof; trimly clad in blue jackets and trousers. The detachment numbered, in the whole, about thirteen hundred men, all fresh and full of spirits. Every eye brightened as they marched briskly along the line with alert step and cheery aspect. They were posted at the left extremity of the intrenchments towards the Wallabout.

There were skirmishes throughout the day, between the riflemen on the advanced posts and the British "irregulars," which at times were quite severe; but no decided attack was attempted. The main body of the enemy kept within their tents until the latter part of the

day; when they began to break ground at about five hundred yards' distance from the works, as if preparing to carry them by regular approaches.

On the 29th, there was a dense fog over the island, that wrapped everything in mystery. In the course of the morning, General Mifflin, with Adjutant-General Reed, and Colonel Grayson of Virginia, one of Washington's aides-de-camp, rode to the western outposts, in the neighborhood of Red Hook. While they were there, a light breeze lifted the fog from a part of the New York Bay, and revealed the British ships at their anchorage opposite Staten Island. There appeared to be an unusual bustle among them. Boats were passing to and from the admiral's ship, as if seeking or carrying orders. Some movement was apparently in agitation. The idea occurred to the reconnoitering party that the fleet was preparing, should the wind hold and the fog clear away, to come up the bay at the turn of the tide, silence the feeble batteries at Red Hook and the city, and anchor in the East River. In that case the army on Long Island would be completely surrounded and entrapped.

Alarmed at this perilous probability, they spurred back to headquarters, to urge the immediate withdrawal of the army. As this

might not be acceptable advice, Reed, emboldened by his intimacy with the commander-in-chief undertook to give it. Washington instantly summoned a council of war. The difficulty was already apparent, of guarding such extensive works with troops fatigued and dispirited, and exposed to the inclemencies of the weather. Other dangers now presented themselves. Their communication with New York might be cut off by the fleet from below. Other ships had passed round Long Island, and were at Flushing Bay on the Sound. These might land troops on the east side of Harlem River, and make themselves masters of King's Bridge; that key of Manhatten Island. Taking all these things into consideration, it was resolved to cross with the troops to the city that very night.

Never did retreat require greater secrecy and circumspection. Nine thousand men, with all the munitions of war, were to be withdrawn from before a victorious army, encamped so near that every stroke of spade and pickaxe from their trenches could be heard. The retreating troops, moreover, were to be embarked and conveyed across a strait three-quarters of a mile wide, swept by rapid tides. The least alarm of their movement would bring the enemy upon them, and produce a terrible scene

of confusion and carnage at the place of embarkation.

Washington made the preparatory arrangements with great alertness, yet profound secrecy. Verbal orders were sent to Colonel Hughes, who acted as quartermaster-general, to impress all water craft, large and small, from Spyt den Duivel on the Hudson round to Hell Gate on the Sound, and have them on the east side of the city by evening. The order was issued at noon, and so promptly executed, that, although some of the vessels had to be brought a distance of fifteen miles, they were all at Brooklyn at eight o'clock in the evening, and put under the management of Colonel Glover's amphibious Marblehead regiment.

To prepare the army for a general movement without betraying the object, orders were issued for the troops to hold themselves in readiness for a night attack upon the enemy. The orders caused surprise, for the poor fellows were exhausted, and their arms rendered nearly useless by the rain; all, however, prepared to obey; but several made nuncupative wills, as is customary among soldiers on the eve of sudden and deadly peril.

According to Washington's plan of retreat, to keep the enemy from discovering the withdrawal of the Americans until their main body

Retreat from Long Island. August 29, 1776.

From a painting by McNevin.

"The effect," says an American who was present, "was at once alarming and sublime. If the explosion was within our lines, the gun was probably discharged in the act of spiking it, and could have been no less a matter of speculation to the enemy than to ourselves."*

"What with the greatness of the stake, the darkness of the night, the uncertainty of the design, and the extreme hazard of the issue," adds the same writer, "it would be difficult to conceive a more deeply solemn and interesting scene."

The meaning of this midnight gun was never ascertained; fortunately, though it startled the Americans, it failed to rouse the British camp.

In the meantime the embarkation went on with all possible despatch, under the vigilant eye of Washington, who stationed himself at the ferry, superintending every movement. In his anxiety for despatch, he sent back Colonel Scammel, one of his aides-de-camp, to hasten forward all the troops that were on the march. Scammel blundered in executing his errand, and gave the order to Mifflin likewise. The general instantly called in his pickets and sentinels, and set off for the ferry.

By this time the tide had turned; there was a strong wind from the northeast; the boats

* Graydon's *Memoirs*, edited by I. S. Littell, p. 167.

with oars were insufficient to convey the troops; those with sails could not make headway against wind and tide. There was some confusion at the ferry, and in the midst of it, General Mifflin came down with the whole covering party, adding to the embarrassment and uproar.

"Good God! General Mifflin!" cried Washington, "I am afraid you have ruined us by so unseasonably withdrawing the troops from the lines."

"I did so by your order," replied Mifflin with some warmth.

"It cannot be!" exclaimed Washington.

"By G—, I did!" was the blunt rejoinder. "Did Scammel act as aide-de-camp for the day, or did he not?"

"He did."

"Then," said Mifflin, "I had orders through him."

"It is a dreadful mistake," rejoined Washington, "and unless the troops can regain the lines before their absence is discovered by the enemy, the most disastrous consequences are to be apprehended."

Mifflin led back his men to the lines, which had been completely deserted for three-quarters of an hour. Fortunately, the dense fog had prevented the enemy from discovering that

they were unoccupied. The men resumed their former posts, and remained at them until called off to cross the ferry. "Whoever has seen troops in a similar situation," writes General Heath, "or duly contemplates the human heart in such trials, will know how to appreciate the conduct of these brave men on this occasion."

The fog which prevailed all this time, seemed almost providential. While it hung over Long Island, and concealed the movements of the Americans, the atmosphere was clear on the New York side of the river. The adverse wind, too, died away, the river become so smooth that the row-boats could be laden almost to the gunwale; and a favoring breeze sprang up for the sail-boats. The whole embarkation of troops, artillery, ammunition, provisions, cattle, horses, and carts, was happily effected, and by daybreak the greater part had safely reached the city, thanks to the aid of Glover's Marblehead men. Scarce anything was abandoned to the enemy, excepting a few heavy pieces of artillery. At a proper time, Mifflin with his covering party left the lines, and effected a silent retreat to the ferry. Washington, though repeatedly entreated, refused to enter a boat until all the troops were embarked; and crossed the river with the last.

A Long Island tradition tells how the British camp became aware of the march which had been stolen upon it.* Near the ferry, resided a Mrs. Rapelye, whose husband, suspected of favoring the enemy, had been removed to the interior of New Jersey. On seeing the embarkation of the first detachment, she, out of loyalty or revenge, sent off a black servant to inform the first British officer he could find, of what was going on. The negro succeeded in passing the American sentinels, but arrived at a Hessian outpost, where he could not make himself understood, and was put under guard as a suspicious person. There he was kept until daybreak, when an officer visiting the post, examined him, and was astounded by his story. An alarm was given, the troops were called to arms ; Captain Montresor, aide-de-camp of General Howe, followed by a handful of men, climbed cautiously over the crest of the works and found them deserted. Advanced parties were hurried down to the ferry. The fog had cleared away sufficiently for them to see the rear boats of the retreating army half-way across the river. One boat, still within musket shot, was compelled to return ; it was manned by three vagabonds, who had lingered behind to plunder.

* *Hist. Long Island*, p. 258.

This extraordinary retreat, which, in its silence and celerity, equalled the midnight fortifying of Bunker's Hill, was one of the most signal achievements of the war, and redounded greatly to the reputation of Washington, who, we are told, for forty-eight hours preceding the safe extricating of his army from their perilous situation, scarce closed his eyes, and was the greater part of the time on horseback. Many, however, who considered the variety of risks and dangers which surrounded the camp, and the apparently fortuitous circumstances which averted them all, were disposed to attribute the safe retreat of the patriot army to a peculiar Providence.

Chapter XVIII.

Long Island in Possession of the Enemy—Distressed Situation of the American Army at New York—Question of Abandoning the City—Letters from either Camp—Enemy's Ships in the Sound—Removal of Women and Children from the City—Yearning for Home among the Militia—Tolerant Ideas of Washington and Greene—Fort Constitution—Conference of Lord Howe with a Committee from Congress.

THE enemy had now possession of Long Island. British and Hessian troops garrisoned the works at Brooklyn, or were distributed at Bushwick, Newton, Hell Gate, and Fushing. Admiral Howe came up with the main body of the fleet, and anchored close to Governor's Island, within cannon shot of the city.

"Our situation is truly distressing," writes Washington to the President of Congress, on the 2d of September. "The check our detachment sustained on the 27th ultimo has dis-

pirited too great a proportion of our troops, and filled their minds with apprehension and despair. The militia, instead of calling forth their utmost efforts to a brave and manly opposition in order to repair our losses, are dismayed, intractable, and impatient to return. Great numbers of them have gone off; in some instances almost by whole regiments, by half ones, and by companies, at a time. . . . With the deepest concern, I am obliged to confess my want of confidence in the generality of the troops. . . . Our number of men at present fit for duty is under twenty thousand. I have ordered General Mercer to send the men intended for the flying camp to this place, about a thousand in number, and to try with the militia, if practicable, to make a diversion upon Staten Island. Till of late, I had no doubt in my own mind of defending this place; nor should I have yet, if the men would do their duty, but this I despair of.

"If we should be obliged to abandon the town, ought it to stand as winter quarters for the enemy? They would derive great conveniences from it, on the one hand, and much property would be destroyed on the other. It is an important question, but will admit of but little time for deliberation. At present, I dare say the enemy mean to preserve it if they can.

If Congress, therefore, should resolve upon the destruction of it, the resolution should be a profound secret, as the knowledge will make a capital change in their plans."

Colonel Reed, writing on the same day to his wife, says, "I have only time to say I am alive and well; as to spirits, but middling. . . . My country will, I trust, yet be free, whatever may be our fate who are cooped up, or in danger of so being, on this tongue of land, where we ought never to have been." *

We turn to cite letters of the very same date from British officers on Long Island, full of rumors and surmises. "I have just heard," writes an English field-officer, "there has been a most dreadful fray in the town of New York. The New Englanders insisted on setting the town on fire and retreating. This was opposed by the New Yorkers, who were joined by the Pennsylvanians, and a battle has been the consequence, in which many have lost their lives. By the steps our general is taking, I imagine he will effectually cut off their retreat at King's Bridge, by which the island of New York is joined to the continent."

An English officer of the Guards, writing from camp on the same day, varies the rumor. The Pennsylvanians, according to his version,

* Force's *Am. Archives*, 5th Series, ii., 123.

joined with the New Englanders in the project to set fire to the town; both had a battle with the New Yorkers on the subject, and then withdrew themselves from the city—which, "with other favorable circumstances," gave the latter writer a lively "hope that this distressful business would soon be brought to a happy issue."

Another letter gives a different version. "In the night of the 2d instant, three persons escaped from the city in a canoe and informed our general that Mr. Washington had ordered three battalions of New York provincials to leave New York, and that they should be replaced by an equal number of Connecticut troops; but the former, assured that the Connecticutians would burn and destroy all the houses, peremptorily refused to give up their city, declaring that no cause of exigency whatever should induce them to intrust the defense of it to any other than her own inhabitants. This spirited and stubborn resolution prevailed over the order of their commander, and the New Yorkers continue snugly in possession of the place." *

"Matters go on swimmingly," writes another officer. "I don't doubt the next news we send you, is, that New York is ours, though

* Force's *Am. Archives*, 5th Series, ii., 168.

in ashes, for the rebel troops have vowed to put it in flames if the tory troops get over."

An American officer writes to an absent New Yorker, in a different tone. "I fear we shall evacuate your poor city. The very thought gives me the horrors!" Still he indulges a vague hope of succor from General Lee, who was returning, all glorious, from his successes at the South. "General Lee," writes he, "is hourly expected, as if from heaven,—with a legion of flaming swordsmen." It was, however, what Lee himself would have termed a mere *brutum fulmen*.

These letters show the state of feeling in the opposite camps, at this watchful moment, when matters seemed hurrying to a crisis.

On the night of Monday (Sept. 2d), a forty-gun ship, taking advantage of a favorable wind and tide, passed between Governor's Island and Long Island, swept unharmed by the batteries which opened upon her, and anchored in Turtle Bay, above the city. In the morning, Washington despatched Major Crane of the artillery, with two twelve-pounders and a howitzer to annoy her from the New York shore. They hulled her several times, and obliged her to take shelter behind Blackwell's Island. Several other ships of war, with transports and store-ships, had made their appearance in the upper

part of the Sound, having gone round Long Island.

As the city might speedily be attacked, Washington caused all the sick and wounded to be conveyed to Orangetown, in the Jerseys, and such military stores and baggage as were not immediately needed, to be removed, as fast as conveyances could be procured, to a post partially fortified at Dobbs Ferry, on the eastern bank of the Hudson, about twenty-two miles above the city.

Reed, in his letters to his wife, talks of the dark and mysterious motions of the enemy, and the equally dark and intricate councils of Congress, by which the army were disheartened and perplexed. "We are still here," writes he on the 6th, "in a posture somewhat awkward; we think (at least I do) that we cannot stay, and yet we do not know how to go, so that we may be properly said to be between hawk and buzzard."

The "shameful and scandalous desertions," as Washington termed them, continued. In a few days the Connecticut militia dwindled down from six to less than two thousand. "The impulse for going home was so irresistible," writes he, "that it answered no purpose to oppose it. Though I would not discharge them, I have been obliged to acquiesce."

Still his considerate mind was tolerant of their defection. "Men," said he, "accustomed to unbounded freedom, cannot brook the restraint which is indispensably necessary to the good order and government of an army." And again, "Men just dragged from the tender scenes of domestic life, unaccustomed to the din of arms, totally unacquainted with every kind of military skill (which is followed by a want of confidence in themselves, when opposed to troops regularly trained, superior in knowledge, and superior in arms), are timid and ready to fly from their own shadows. Besides, the sudden change in their manner of living, brings on an unconquerable desire to return to their homes."

Greene, also, who coincided so much with Washington in opinions and sentiments, observes: "People coming from home with all the tender feelings of domestic life, are not sufficiently fortified with natural courage to stand the shocking scenes of war. To march over dead men, to hear without concern the groans of the wounded, I say few men can stand such scenes unless steeled by habit or fortified by military pride."

Nor was this ill-timed yearning for home confined to the yeomanry of Connecticut, who might well look back to their humble farms,

where they had left the plough standing in the furrow, and where everything might go to ruin, and their family to want, in their absence. Some of the gentlemen volunteers from beyond the Delaware, who had made themselves merry at the expense of the rustic soldiery of New England, were likewise among the first to feel the homeward impulse. "When I look around," said Reed, the adjutant-general, "and see how few of the numbers who talked so loudly of death and honor are around me, I am lost in wonder and surprise. Some of our Philadelphia gentlemen who came over on visits, upon the first cannon, went off in a most violent hurry. Your noisy sons of liberty, are, I find, the quietest on the field." *

Present experience induced Washington to reiterate the opinion he had repeatedly expressed to Congress, that little reliance was to be placed on militia enlisted for short periods. The only means of protecting the national liberties from great hazard, if not utter loss, was, he said, an army enlisted for the war.

The thousand men ordered from the flying camp were furnished by General Mercer. They were Maryland troops under Colonels Griffith and Richardson, and were a seasonable addition to his effective forces; but the ammuni-

* *Life of Reed*, i., 231.

tion carried off by the disbanding militia, was a serious loss at this critical juncture.

A work had been commenced on the Jersey shore, opposite Fort Washington, to aid in protecting Putnam's chevaux-de-frise which had been sunk between them. This work had received the name of Fort Constitution (a name already borne by one of the forts in the Highlands). Troops were drawn from the flying camp to make a strong encampment in the vicinity of the fort, with an able officer to command it and a skilful engineer to strengthen the works. It was hoped, by the co-operation of these opposite forts and the chevaux-de-frise, to command the Hudson, and prevent the passing and repassing of hostile ships.

The British, in the meantime, forebore to press further hostilities. Lord Howe was really desirous of a peaceful adjustment of the strife between the colonies and the mother country, and supposed this a propitious moment for a new attempt at pacification. He accordingly sent off General Sullivan to parole, charged with an overture to Congress. In this he declared himself empowered and disposed to compromise the dispute between Great Britain and America, on the most favorable terms, and, though he could not treat with Congress as a legally organized body, he was desirous

of a conference with some of its members. These, for the time he should consider only as private gentlemen, but if in the conference any probable scheme of accommodation should be agreed upon, the authority of Congress would afterwards be acknowledged, to render the compact complete. *

The message caused some embarrassment in Congress. To accede to the interview might seem to waive the question of independence; to decline it was to shut the door on all hope of conciliation, and might alienate the co-operation of some worthy whigs who still clung to that hope. After much debate, Congress, on the 5th September, replied, that, being the representatives of the free and independent States of America, they could not send any members to confer with his lordship in their private characters, but that, ever desirous of establishing peace on reasonable terms, they would send a committee of their body to ascertain what authority he had to treat with persons authorized by Congress, and what propositions he had to offer.

A committee was chosen on the 6th of September, composed of John Adams, Edward Rutledge, and Doctor Franklin. The latter, in the preceding year, during his residence in

* *Civil War*, vol. i., p. 190.

England, had become acquainted with Lord Howe, at the house of his lordship's sister, the Honorable Mrs. Howe, and they had held frequent conversations on the subject of American affairs, in the course of which his lordship had intimated the possibility of his being sent commissioner to settle the differences in America.

Franklin had recently adverted to this in a letter to Lord Howe. "Your lordship may possibly remember the tears of joy that wet my cheek, when, at your good sister's in London, you gave me expectations that a reconciliation might soon take place. I had the misfortune to find those expectations disappointed.

. . . . . .

"The well-founded esteem, and, permit me to say, affection, which I shall always have for your lordship, makes it painful for me to see you engaged in conducting a war, the great ground of which, as expressed in your letter, is 'the necessity of preventing the American trade from passing into foreign channels.' . . . I know your great motive in coming hither, was the hope of being instrumental in a reconciliation; and I believe that when you find *that* impossible on any terms given to you to propose, you will relinquish so odious a command, and return to a more honorable private situation."

"I can have no difficulty to acknowledge," replied Lord Howe, "that the powers I am invested with were never calculated to negotiate a reunion with America, under any other description than as subject to the crown of Great Britain. But I do esteem these powers competent, not only to confer and negotiate with any gentleman of influence in the colonies upon the terms, but also to effect a lasting peace and reunion between the two countries, were the tempers of the colonies such as professed in the last petition of Congress to the king." *

A hope of the kind lingered in the breast of his lordship when he sought the proposed conference. It was to take place on the 11th, at a house on Staten Island, opposite to Amboy; at which latter place the veteran Mercer was stationed with his flying camp. At Amboy, the committee found Lord Howe's barge waiting to receive them; with a British officer of rank, who was to remain within the American lines during their absence, as a hostage. This guarantee of safety was promptly declined, and the parties crossed together to Staten Island. The admiral met them on their landing, and conducted them through his guards to his house.

* Franklin's *Writings*, v., 103.

On opening the conference, his lordship again intimated that he could not treat with them as a committee of Congress, but only confer with them as private gentlemen of influence in the colonies, on the means of restoring peace between the two countries.

The commissioners replied that, as their business was to hear, he might consider them in what light he pleased; but that they should consider themselves in no other character than that in which they were placed by order of Congress.

Lord Howe then entered into a discourse of considerable length, but made no explicit proposition of peace, nor promise of redress of grievances, excepting on condition that the colonies should return to their allegiance.

This, the commissioners replied, was not now to be expected. Their repeated humble petitions to the king and parliament having been treated with contempt, and answered by additional injuries, and war having been declared against them, the colonies had declared their independence, and it was not in the power of Congress to agree for them that they should return to their former dependent state."

His lordship expressed his sorrow that no

* Report of the Commissioners to Congress, Sept. 13, 1776.

accommodation was likely to take place; and, on breaking up the conference, assured his old friend, Dr. Franklin, that he should suffer great pain in being obliged to distress those for whom he had so much regard.

"I feel thankful to your lordship for your regard," replied Franklin good-humoredly; "the Americans, on their part, will endeavor to lessen the pain you may feel, by taking good care of themselves."

The result of this conference had a beneficial effect. It showed that his lordship had no power but what was given by the act of Parliament; and put an end to the popular notion that he was vested with secret powers to negotiate an adjustment of grievances.

Chapter XIX.

Movements of the Enemy—Councils of War—Question of the Abandonment of the City—Distribution of the Army—Ships in the East River—The Enemy at Hell Gate—Skirmish at Turtle Bay—Panic of the Connecticut Militia—Rage and Personal Peril of Washington—Putnam's Perilous Retreat from the City—British Regale at Murray Hill.

SINCE the retreat from Brooklyn, Washington had narrowly watched the movements of the enemy to discover their further plans. Their whole force, excepting about four thousand men, had been transferred from Staten to Long Island. A great part was encamped on the peninsula between Newtown Inlet and Flushing Bay. A battery had been thrown up near the extremity of the peninsula, to check an American battery at Horen's Hook opposite, and to command the mouth of Harlem River. Troops were subsequently stationed on the islands about Hell Gate. "It is evident," writes Washington,

"the enemy mean to inclose us on the island of New York, by taking post in our rear, while the shipping secures the front, and thus, by cutting off our communication with the country, oblige us to fight them on their own terms, or surrender at discretion; or by a brilliant stroke endeavor to cut this army in pieces, and secure the collection of arms and stores, which, they well know, we shall not be able soon to replace." *

The question was, how could their plans be most successfully opposed? On every side, he saw a choice of difficulties; every measure was to be formed with some apprehension that all the troops would not do their duty. History, experience, the opinions of able friends in Europe, the fears of the enemy, even the declarations of Congress, all concurred in demonstrating that the war on the American side should be defensive; a war of posts; that, on all occasions, a general action should be avoided, and nothing put at risk unnecessarily. "With these views," said Washington, "and being fully persuaded that it would be presumption to draw out our young troops into open ground against their superiors, both in number and discipline, I have never spared the spade and pickaxe."

* Letter to the President of Congress.

In a council of war, held on the 7th of September, the question was discussed, whether the city should be defended or evacuated. All admitted that it would not be tenable, should it be cannonaded and bombarded. Several of the council, among whom was General Putnam, were for a total and immediate removal from the city; urging that one part of the army might be cut off before the other could support it; the extremities being at least sixteen miles apart, and the whole, when collected, being inferior to the enemy. By removing, they would deprive the enemy of the advantage of their ships; they would keep them at bay; put nothing at hazard; keep the army together to be recruited another year, and preserve the unspent stores and the heavy artillery. Washington himself inclined to this opinion. Others, however, were unwilling to abandon a place which had been fortified with great cost and labor, and seemed defensible; and which, by some, had been considered the key to the northern country; it might dispirit the troops and enfeeble the cause. General Mercer, who was prevented by illness from attending the council, communicated his opinion by letter. "We should keep New York if possible," said he, "as the acquiring of it will give eclat to the arms of Great Britain,

afford the soldiers good quarters, and furnish a safe harbor for the fleet.''

General Greene, also, being still unwell, conveyed his opinion in a letter to Washington, dated September 5th. He advised that the army should abandon both city and island, and post itself at King's Bridge and along the Westchester shore. That there was no object to be obtained by holding any position below King's Bridge. The enemy might throw troops on Manhattan Island, from their camps on Long Island, and their ships on the Hudson, and form an intrenched line across it, between the city and the middle division of the army, and support the two flanks of the line by their shipping. In such case, it would be necessary to fight them on disadvantageous terms or submit.

The city and island, he observed, were objects not to be put in competition with the general interests of America. Two thirds of the city and suburbs belonged to tories; there was no great reason, therefore, to run any considerable risk in its defense. The honor and interest of America required a general and speedy retreat. But as the enemy, once in possession, could never be dislodged without a superior naval force; as the place would furnish them with excellent winter quarters and barrack room,

and an abundant market, he advised to burn both city and suburbs before retreating.*

Well might the poor, harassed citizens feel hysterical, threatened as they were by sea and land, and their very defenders debating the policy of burning their houses over their heads. Fortunately for them, Congress had expressly forbidden that any harm should be done to New York, trusting, that though the enemy might occupy it for a time, it would ultimately be regained.

After much discussion a middle course was adopted. Putnam, with five thousand men, was to be stationed in the city. Heath, with nine thousand, was to keep guard on the upper part of the island, and oppose any attempt of the enemy to land. His troops, among whom were Magaw's, Shee's, Hand's, and Miles's Pennsylvania battalions, and Haslet's Delaware regiment, were posted about King's Bridge and its vicinity.

The third division, composed principally of militia, was under the command of Generals Greene and Spencer, the former of whom, however, was still unwell. It was stationed about the centre of the island, chiefly along Turtle Bay and Kip's Bay, where strong works had been thrown up, to guard against any

* Force's *Am. Archives*, 5th Series, ii., 182.

landing of troops from the ships or from the encampments on Long Island. It was also to hold itself ready to support either of the other divisions. Washington himself had his headquarters at a short distance from the city. A resolution of Congress, passed the 10th of September, left the occupation or abandonment of the city entirely at Washington's discretion. Nearly the whole of his officers, too, in a second council of war, retracted their former opinion, and determined that the removal of his army was not only prudent, but absolutely necessary. Three members of the council, however, Generals Spencer, Heath, and George Clinton, tenaciously held to the former decision.

Convinced of the propriety of evacuation, Washington prepared for it by ordering the removal of all stores, excepting such as were indispensable for the subsistence of the troops while they remained. A letter from a Rhode Island officer, on a visit to New York, gives an idea of its agitations. "On the 13th of September, just after dinner, three frigates and a forty-gun ship sailed up the East River with a gentle breeze, toward Hell Gate, and kept up an incessant fire, assisted by the cannon at Governor's Island. The batteries of the city returned the ships the like salutation. Three men agape, idle spectators, had the misfortune

of being killed by one cannon ball. One shot struck within six feet of General Washington, as he was on horseback, riding into the fort." *

On the 14th, Washington's baggage was removed to King's Bridge, whither headquarters were to be transferred the same evening, it being clear that the enemy were preparing to encompass him on the island. "It is now a trial of skill whether they will or not," writes Colonel Reed, "and every night we lie down with the most anxious fears for the fate of to-morrow." †

About sunset of the same day, six more ships, two of them men-of-war, passed up the Sound and joined those above. Within half an hour came expresses spurring to headquarters, one from Mifflin at King's Bridge, the other from Colonel Sargent at Horen's Hook. Three or four thousand of the enemy were crossing at Hell Gate to the islands at the mouth of Harlem River, where numbers were already encamped. An immediate landing at Harlem, or Morrisania, was apprehended. Washington was instantly in the saddle, spurring to Harlem Heights. The night, however, passed away quietly. In the morning the

* Col. Babcock to Gov. Cooke. *Am. Archives*, 5th Series, ii., 443.

† Reed to Mrs. Reed.

enemy commenced operations. Three ships of war stood up the Hudson, "causing a most tremendous firing, assisted by the cannons of Governor's Island, which firing was returned from the city as well as the scarcity of heavy cannon would allow." * The ships anchored opposite Bloomingdale, a few miles above the city, and put a stop to the removal by water of stores and provisions to Dobbs Ferry. About eleven o'clock, the ships in the East River commenced a heavy cannonade upon the breastworks between Turtle Bay and the city. At the same time two divisions of the troops encamped on Long Island, one British, under Sir Henry Clinton, the other Hessian, under Colonel Donop, emerged in boats from the deep, woody recesses of Newton Inlet, and under cover of the fire from the ships, began to land at two points between Turtle and Kip's Bays. The breastworks were manned by militia who had recently served at Brooklyn. Disheartened by their late defeat, they fled at the first advance of the enemy. Two brigades of Putnam's Connecticut troops (Parsons' and Fellows') which had been sent that morning to support them, caught the panic, and, regardless of the commands and entreaties of their officers, joined in the general scamper.

* Letter of Col. Babcock to Gov. Cooke.

At this moment Washington, who had mounted his horse at the first sound of the cannonade, came galloping to the scene of confusion; riding in among the fugitives, he endeavored to rally and restore them to order. All in vain. At the first appearance of sixty or seventy red-coats, they broke again without firing a shot, and fled in headlong terror. Losing all self-command at the sight of such dastardly conduct, he dashed his hat upon the ground in a transport of rage. "Are these the men," exclaimed he, "with whom I am to defend America!" In a paroxysm of passion and despair he snapped his pistols at some of them, threatened others with his sword, and was so heedless of his own danger, that he might have fallen into the hands of the enemy, who were not eighty yards distant, had not an aide-de-camp seized the bridle of his horse, and absolutely hurried him away.*

It was one of the rare moments of his life,

* Graydon's *Memoirs*, Littell's ed., p. 174. General Greene, in a letter to a friend, writes: "We made a miserable, disorderly retreat from New York, owing to the conduct of the militia, who ran at the appearance of the enemy's advanced guard. Fellows' and Parsons' brigades ran away from about fifty men, and left his Excellency on the ground, within eighty yards of the enemy, so vexed at the infamous conduct of his troops, that he sought death rather than life."

when the vehement element of his nature was stirred up from its deep recesses. He soon recovered his self-possession, and took measures against the general peril. The enemy might land another force about Hell Gate, seize upon Harlem Heights, the strong central portion of the island, cut off all retreat of the lower divisions, and effectually sever his army. In all haste, therefore, he sent off an express to the forces encamped above, directing them to secure that position immediately; while another express to Putnam, ordered an immediate retreat from the city to those heights.

It was indeed a perilous moment. Had the enemy followed up their advantage, and seized upon the heights, before thus occupied; or had they extended themselves across the island, from the place where they had effected a landing, the result might have been most disastrous to the Americans. Fortunately, they contented themselves for the present with sending a strong detachment down the road along the East River, leading to the city, while the main body, British and Hessians, rested on their arms.

In the meantime, Putnam, on receiving Washington's express, called in his pickets and guards, and abandoned the city in all haste, leaving behind him a large quantity of

provisions and military stores, and most of the heavy cannon. To avoid the enemy he took the Bloomingdale road, though this exposed him to be raked by the enemy's ships anchored in the Hudson. It was a forced march, on a sultry day, under a burning sun, and amid clouds of dust. His army was encumbered with women and children and all kinds of baggage. Many were overcome by fatigue and thirst, some perished by hastily drinking cold water; but Putnam rode backward and forward hurrying every one on.

Colonel Humphreys, at that time a volunteer in his division, writes: "I had frequent opportunities that day of beholding him, for the purpose of issuing orders and encouraging the troops, flying on his horse covered with foam, wherever his presence was most necessary. Without his extraordinary exertions, the guards must have been inevitably lost, and it is probable the entire corps would have been cut in pieces.

"When we were not far from Bloomingdale, an aide-de-camp came to him at full speed, to inform him that a column of British infantry was descending upon our right. Our rear was soon fired upon, and the colonel of our regiment, whose order was just communicated for the front to file off to the left, was killed upon

the spot. With no other loss, we joined the army after dark upon the heights of Harlem." *

Tradition gives a circumstance which favored Putnam's retreat. The British generals, in passing by Murray Hill, the country residence of a patriot of that name who was of the Society of Friends, made a halt to seek some refreshment. The proprietor of the house was absent; but his wife set cake and wine before them in abundance. So grateful were these refreshments in the heat of the day, that they lingered over their wine, quaffing and laughing, and bantering their patriotic hostess about the ludicrous panic and discomfiture of her countrymen. In the meantime, before they were roused from their regale, Putnam and his forces had nearly passed by, within a mile of them. All the loss sustained by him in his perilous retreat, was about fifteen killed, and about three hundred taken prisoners. It became, adds the tradition, a common saying among the American officers, that Mrs. Murray saved Putnam's division of the army. †

* Peabody, *Life of Putnam.* Sparks, *Am. Biog.*, vii., 189.

† Thacher's *Military Journal*, p. 70.

Chapter XX.

Fortified Camp at King's Bridge—American and British Lines—The Morris House—Alexander Hamilton—The Enemy Advance—Successful Skirmish—Death of Knowlton—Great Fire in New York—Reorganization of the Army—Exchange of Prisoners—Daniel Morgan Regained—De Lancey's Tory Brigade—Robert Rogers, the Partisan—His Rangers—The *Roebuck*, *Phœnix*, and *Tartar* in the Hudson—Military Movements by Land and Water—Letter of John Jay.

THE fortified camp, where the main body of the army was now assembled, was upon that neck of land several miles long, and for the most part not above a mile wide, which forms the upper part of Manhattan or New York Island. It forms a chain of rocky heights, and is separated from the mainland by Harlem River, a narrow strait, extending from Hell Gate on the Sound, to Spyt den Duivel, a creek or inlet of the Hudson. Fort Washington occupied the crest of

one of the rocky heights above mentioned, overlooking the Hudson, and about two miles north of it was King's Bridge, crossing Spyt den Duivel Creek, and forming at that time the only pass from Manhattan Island to the mainland.

About a mile and a half south of the fort, a double row of lines extended across the neck from Harlem River to the Hudson. They faced south towards New York, were about a quarter of a mile apart, and were defended by batteries.

There were strong advanced posts, about two miles south of the outer line; one on the left of Harlem, commanded by General Spencer, the other on the right, at what was called McGowan's Pass, commanded by General Putnam. About a mile and a half beyond these posts the British lines extended across the island from Horen's Hook to the Hudson, being a continuous encampment, two miles in length, with both flanks covered by shipping. An open plain intervened between the hostile camps.

Washington had established his headquarters about a quarter of a mile within the inner line; at a country-seat, the owners of which were absent. It belonged in fact to Colonel Roger Morris, his early companion in arms in

were thrown up under the direction of a youthful captain of artillery. It proved to be the same young officer, Alexander Hamilton, whom Greene had recommended to his notice. After some conversation with him, Washington invited him to his marquee, and thus commenced that intercourse which has indissolubly linked their memories together.

On the morning of the 16th, word was brought to headquarters that the enemy were advancing in three large columns. There had been so many false reports, that Reed, the adjutant-general, obtained leave to sally forth and ascertain the truth. Washington himself soon mounted his horse and rode towards the advanced posts. On arriving there he heard a brisk firing. It was kept up for a time with great spirit. There was evidently a sharp conflict. At length Reed came galloping back with information. A strong detachment of the enemy had attacked the most advanced post, which was situated on a hill skirted by a wood. It had been bravely defended by Lieutenant-Colonel Knowlton, Putnam's favorite officer, who had distinguished himself at Bunker's Hill; he had under him a party of Connecticut rangers, volunteers from different regiments. After skirmishing for a time, the party had been overpowered by numbers and

driven in, and the outpost was taken possession of by the enemy. Reed supposed the latter to be about three hundred strong, but they were much stronger, the main part having been concealed behind a rising ground in the wood. They were composed of a battalion of light infantry, another of Royal Highlanders, and three companies of Hessian riflemen; all under the command of General Leslie.

Reed urged that troops should be sent to support the brave fellows who had behaved so well. While he was talking with Washington, "the enemy," he says, "appeared in open view, and sounded their bugles in the most insulting manner, as usual after a fox-chase. I never," adds he, "felt such a sensation before; it seemed to crown our disgrace."

Washington, too, was stung by the taunting note of derision; it recalled the easy triumph of the enemy at Kip's Bay. Resolved that something should be done to wipe out that disgrace, and rouse the spirits of the army, he ordered out three companies from Colonel Weedon's regiment just arrived from Virginia, and sent them under Major Leitch, to join Knowlton's rangers. The troops thus united were to get in the rear of the enemy, while a feigned attack was made upon them in front.

The plan was partially successful. As the

force advanced to make the false attack, the enemy ran down the hill, and took what they considered an advantageous position behind some fences and bushes which skirted it. A firing commenced between them and the advancing party, but at too great a distance to do much harm on either side. In the meantime, Knowlton and Leitch, ignorant of this change in the enemy's position, having made a circuit, came upon them in flank instead of in rear. They were sharply received. A vivid contest took place, in which Connecticut vied with Virginia in bravery. In a little while Major Leitch received three bullets in his side, and was borne off the field. Shortly afterward, a wound in the head from a musket ball, brought Knowlton to the ground. Colonel Reed placed him on his horse, and conveyed him to a distant redoubt. The men, undismayed by the fall of their leaders, fought with unflinching resolution under the command of their captains. The enemy were reinforced by a battalion of Hessians and a company of chasseurs. Washington likewise sent reinforcements of New England and Maryland troops. The action waxed hotter and hotter; the enemy were driven from the wood into the plain, and pushed for some distance; the Americans were pursuing them

with ardor, when Washington, having effected the object of this casual encounter, and being unwilling to risk a general action, ordered a retreat to be sounded.

It was with difficulty, however, his men could be called off, so excited were they by the novelty of pursuing an enemy. They retired in good order; and, as it subsequently appeared, in good season, for the main body of the enemy were advancing at a rapid rate, and might have effectually reversed the scene.

Colonel Knowlton did not long survive the action. "When gasping in the agonies of death," says Colonel Reed, "all his inquiry was whether he had driven in the enemy." He was anxious for the tarnished honor of Connecticut. He had the dying satisfaction of knowing that his men had behaved bravely, and driven the enemy in an open field-fight. So closed his gallant career.

The encounter thus detailed was a small affair in itself, but important in its effects. It was the first gleam of success in the campaign, and revived the spirits of the army. Washington sought to turn it to the greatest advantage. In his general orders, he skilfully distributed praise and censure. The troops under Leitch were thanked for being the first to advance upon the enemy; and the New

England troops for gallantly supporting them; and their conduct was honorably contrasted with that of the recreant troops at Kip's Bay. Of Knowlton, who had fallen while gloriously fighting, he spoke as "one who would have done honor to any country."

The name of Leitch was given by him for the next day's parole. That brave officer died of his wounds on the 1st of October, soothed in his last moments by that recompense so dear to a soldier's heart, the encomium of a beloved commander.

In the dead of the night, on the 20th of September, a great light was beheld by the picket guards, looming up from behind the hills in the direction of the city. It continued throughout the night, and was at times so strong that the heavens in that direction appeared to them, they said, as if in flames. At daybreak huge columns of smoke were still rising. It was evident there had been a great conflagration in New York.

In the course of the morning Captain Montresor, aide-de-camp to General Howe, came out with a flag, bearing a letter to Washington on the subject of an exchange of prisoners. According to Montresor's account a great part of the city had been burnt down, and as the night was extremely windy, the whole might

have been so, but for the exertions of the officers and men of the British army. He implied it to be the act of American incendiaries, several of whom, he informed Colonel Reed, had been caught in the fact and instantly shot. General Howe, in his private correspondence, makes the same assertion, and says they were detected, and killed on the spot by the enraged troops in garrison.

Enraged troops, with weapons in their hands, are not apt, in a time of confusion and alarm, to be correct judges of fact, or dispensers of justice. The act was always disclaimed by the Americans, and it is certain their commanders knew nothing about it. We have shown that the destruction of the city was at one time discussed in a council of war as a measure of policy, but never adopted, and was expressly forbidden by Congress.

The enemy were now bringing up their heavy cannon, preparatory to an attack upon the American camp by the troops and by the ships. What was the state of Washington's army? The terms of engagement of many of his men would soon be at an end, most of them would terminate with the year, nor did Congress hold out offers to encourage re-enlistments. "We are now, as it were, upon the eve of another dissolution of the army," writes

he, "and unless some speedy and effectual measures are adopted by Congress, our cause will be lost." Under these gloomy apprehensions, he borrowed, as he said, "a few moments from the hours allotted to sleep," and on the night of the 24th of September, penned an admirable letter to the President of Congress, setting forth the total inefficiency of the existing military system, the total insubordination, waste, confusion, and discontent produced by it among the men, and the harassing cares and vexations to which it subjected the commanders. Nor did he content himself with complaining, but, in his full, clear, and sagacious manner, pointed out the remedies. To the achievements of his indefatigable pen, we may trace the most fortunate turns in the current of our revolutionary affairs. In the present instance his representations, illustrated by sad experience, produced at length a reorganization of the army, and the establishment of it on a permanent footing. It was decreed that eighty-eight battalions should be furnished in quotas, by the different States, according to their abilities. The pay of the officers was raised. The troops which engaged to serve throughout the war were to receive a bounty of twenty dollars and one hundred acres of land, besides a yearly suit of clothes while in service. Those who

enlisted for but three years, received no bounty in land. The bounty to officers was on a higher ratio. The States were to send commissioners to the army, to arrange with the commander-in-chief as to the appointment of officers in their quotas; but, as they might occasionally be slow in complying with this regulation, Washington was empowered to fill up all vacancies.

All this was a great relief to his mind. He was gratified, also, by effecting, after a long correspondence with the British commander, an exchange of prisoners, in which those captured in Canada were included. Among those restored to the service were Lord Stirling and Captain Daniel Morgan. The latter, in reward of his good conduct in the expedition with Arnold, and of "his intrepid behavior in the assault upon Quebec, where the brave Montgomery fell," was recommended to Congress by Washington for the command of a rifle regiment about to be raised. We shall see how eminently he proved himself worthy of this recommendation.

About this time information was received that the enemy were enlisting great numbers of the loyalists of Long Island, and collecting large quantities of stock for their support. Oliver De Lancey, a leading loyalist of New York, member of a wealthy family of honora-

ble Huguenot descent, was a prime agent in the matter. He had recently been appointed brigadier-general in the royal service, and authorized by General Howe to raise a brigade of provincials; and was actually at Jamaica, on Long Island, offering commissions of captain, lieutenant, and ensign, to any respectable person who should raise a company of seventy men; the latter to receive British pay.

A descent upon Long Island, to counteract these projects, was concerted by General George Clinton of New York, and General Lincoln of Massachusetts, but men and water craft were wanting to carry it into effect, and the "tory enlistments continued." They were not confined to Long Island, but prevailed more or less on Staten Island, in the Jerseys, up the Hudson as far as Dutchess County, and in Westchester County, more especially. Many of the loyalists, it must be acknowledged, were honorable men, conscientiously engaged in the service of their sovereign, and anxious to put down what they sincerely regarded as an unjustifiable rebellion; and among these may be clearly classed the De Lanceys. There were others, however, of a different stamp, the most notorious of whom, at this juncture, was one Robert Rogers of New Hampshire. He had been a worthy comrade of Putnam and Stark, in some

of their early enterprises during the French war, and had made himself famous as major of a partisan corps called Rogers' Rangers. Governor Trumbull described him as a "famous scouter and wood-hunter, skilled in waylaying, ambuscade, and sudden attack." His feats of arms had evidently somewhat of the Indian character. He had since been governor of Michilimackinac (1766), and accused of a plot to plunder his own fort and join the French. At the outbreak of the Revolution he played a skulking, equivocal part, and appeared ready to join either party. In 1775, Washington had received notice that he was in Canada, in the service of Carleton, and had been as a spy, disguised as an Indian, through the American camp at St. John's.

Recently, on learning that he was prowling about the country under suspicious circumstances, Washington had caused him to be arrested. On examination, he declared that he was on his way to offer his secret services to Congress. He was accordingly sent on to that body, in the custody of an officer. Congress liberated him on his pledging himself in writing, "on the honor of a gentleman," not to bear arms against the American United Colonies in any manner whatever, during the contest with great Britain.

Scarcely was he liberated when he forfeited his parole, offered his services to the enemy, received a colonel's commission, and was now actually raising a tory corps to be called the Queen's Rangers. All such as should bring recruits to his standard were promised commissions, portions of rebel lands, and privileges equal to any of His Majesty's troops.

Of all Americans of note enlisted under the royal standard, this man had rendered himself the most odious. He was stigmatized as an arrant renegade, a perfect Judas Iscariot; and his daring, adventurous spirit and habits of Indian warfare rendered him a formidable enemy.

Nothing perplexed Washington at this juncture more than the conduct of the enemy. He beheld before him a hostile army, armed and equipped at all points, superior in numbers, thoroughly disciplined, flushed with success, and abounding in the means of pushing a vigorous campaign, yet suffering day after day to elapse unimproved. What could be the reason of this supineness on the part of Sir William Howe? He must know the depressed and disorganized state of the American camp; the absolute chaos that reigned there. Did he meditate an irruption into the Jerseys? A movement towards Philadelphia? Did he in-

tend to detach a part of his forces for a winter's campaign against the South?

In this uncertainty, Washington wrote to General Mercer, of the flying camp, to keep a vigilant watch from the Jersey shore on the movements of the enemy, by sea and land, and to station videttes on the Neversink Heights, to give immediate intelligence should any of the British fleet put to sea. At the same time he himself practised unceasing vigilance, visiting the different parts of his camp on horseback. Occasionally he crossed over to Fort Constitution, on the Jersey shore, of which General Greene had charge, and, accompanied by him, extended his reconnoiterings down to Paulus Hook, to observe what was going on in the city and among the enemy's ships. Greene had recently been promoted to the rank of major-general, and now had command of all the troops in the Jerseys. He had liberty to shift his quarters to Baskingridge or Bergen, as circumstances might require; but was enjoined to keep up a communication with the main army, east of the Hudson, so as to secure a retreat in case of necessity.

The security of the Hudson was at this time an object of great solicitude with Congress, and much reliance was placed on Putnam's obstructions at Fort Washington. Four gal-

leys, mounted with heavy guns and swivels, were stationed at the chevaux-de-frise, and two new ships were at hand, which, filled with stones, were to be sunk where they would block up the channel. A sloop was also at anchor, having on board a machine, invented by a Mr. Bushnell, for submarine explosion, with which to blow up the men-of-war, a favorite scheme with General Putnam. The obstructions were so commanded by batteries on each shore, that it was thought no hostile ship would be able to pass.

On the 9th of October, however, the *Roebuck* and *Phœnix*, each of forty-four guns, and the *Tartar* of twenty guns, which had been lying for some time opposite Bloomingdale, got under way with their three tenders, at eight o'clock in the morning, and came standing up the river with an easy southern breeze. At their approach, the galleys and the two ships intended to be sunk, got under way with all haste, as did a schooner laden with rum, sugar, and other supplies for the American army, and the sloop with Bushnell's submarine machine.

The *Roebuck*, *Phœnix*, and *Tartar* broke through the vaunted barriers as through a cobweb. Seven batteries kept a constant fire upon them, yet a gentleman was observed walking the deck of the second ship as coolly

as if nothing were the matter.* Washington, indeed, in a letter to Schuyler, says "they passed without any kind of damage or interruption"; but Lord Howe reports to the admiralty that they suffered much in their masts and rigging, and that a lieutenant, two midshipmen, and six men were killed, and eighteen wounded.

The hostile ships kept on their course, the American vessels scudding before them. The schooner was overhauled and captured; a well-aimed shot sent the sloop and Bushnell's submarine engine to the bottom of the river. The two new ships would have taken refuge in Spyt den Duivel Creek, but fearing there might not be water enough, they kept on and drove ashore at Philips' Mills at Yonkers. Two of the galleys got into a place of safety, where they were protected from the shore; the other two trusted to outsail their pursuers. The breeze freshened, and the frigates gained on them fast; at 11 o'clock began to fire on them with their bow-chasers, and at 12 o'clock overreached them, which caused them to bear in shore; at half-past one the galleys ran aground just above Dobbs Ferry, and lay exposed to a shower of grape-shot. The crews, without stopping to burn or bilge them, swam

* Col. Ewing to the Maryland Committee of Safety.

on shore, and the enemy took possession of the two galleys, which were likely to be formidable means of annoyance in their hands.

One express after another brought Washington word of these occurrences. First, he sent off a party of rifle and artillery men, with two twelve-pounders, to secure the new ships which had run aground at Yonkers. Next, he ordered Colonel Sargent to march up along the eastern shore with five hundred infantry, a troop of light horse, and a detachment of artillery, to prevent the landing of the enemy. Before the troops arrived at Dobbs Ferry the ships' boats had plundered a store there, and set it on fire.

To prevent, if possible, the men-of-war already up the river from coming down, or others from below joining them, Washington gave orders to complete the obstructions. Two hulks which lay in Spyt den Duivel Creek were hastily ballasted by men from General Heath's division, and men were sent up to get off the ships which had run aground at Philips' Mills, that they might be brought down and sunk immediately.

It is difficult to give an idea of the excitement caused by this new irruption of hostile ships into the waters of the Hudson or of the various conjectures as to their object. They

might intend merely to interrupt navigation, and prevent supplies from coming down to the American army. They might be carrying arms and ammunition for domestic enemies skulking about the river, and only waiting an opportunity to strike a blow. They might have troops concealed on board with intent to surprise the posts in the Highlands, and cut off the intercourse between the American armies. To such a degree had the spirit of disaffection been increased in the counties adjacent to the river, since the descent of the *Rose* and *Phœnix*, by the retreats and evacuation which had taken place, and so great had been the drain on the militia of those counties for the army of Washington, that, in case of insurrection, those who remained at home and were well affected, would be outnumbered, and might easily be overpowered, especially with the aid of troops landed from ships.

While this agitation prevailed below, fugitive river crafts carried the news up to the Highlands that the frigates were already before Tarrytown in the Tappan Sea. Word was instantly despatched to Peter R. Livingston, president of the Provincial Congress, and startled that deliberative body, which was then seated at Fishkill just above the Highlands. The Committee of Safety wrote, on the

spur of the moment, to Washington. "Nothing," say they, "can be more alarming than the present situation of our State. We are daily getting the most authentic intelligence of bodies of men enlisted and armed in order to assist the enemy. We much fear that they, co-operating with the enemy, may seize such passes as will cut off communication between the army and us, and prevent your supplies. . . . We beg leave to suggest to your Excellency the propriety of sending a body of men to the Highlands or Peekskill, to secure the passes, prevent insurrection, and overawe the disaffected."

Washington transmitted the letter to the President of Congress on the 12th. "I have ordered up," writes he, "part of the militia from Massachusetts, under General Lincoln, to prevent, if possible, the consequences which they suggest may happen, and which there is reason to believe the conspirators have in contemplation. I am persuaded that they are on the eve of breaking out, and that they will leave nothing unessayed that will distress us, and favor the designs of the enemy, as soon as their schemes are ripe for it." In fact, it was said that the tories were arming and collecting in the Highlands under the direction of disguised officers, to aid the conspiracies formed by governor Tryon and his adherents.

As a further precaution, an express was sent off by Washington to Colonel Tash, who, with a regiment of New Hampshire militia, was on his way from Hartford to the camp, ordering him to repair with all possible despatch to Fishkill, and there hold himself at the disposition of the Committee of Safety.

James Clinton, also, who had charge of the posts in the Highlands, was put on the alert. That trusty officer was now a brigadier-general, having been promoted by Congress, on the 8th of August. He was charged to have all boats passing up and down the river rigidly searched, and the passengers examined. Beside the usual sentries, a barge, well manned, was to patrol the river opposite to each fort every night; all barges, row-boats, and other small craft, between the forts, in the Highlands and the army, were to be secured in a place of safety, to prevent their falling into the enemy's hands and giving intelligence. Moreover, a French engineer was sent up to aid in strengthening and securing the passes. The commanding officers of the counties of Litchfield and Fairfield in Connecticut, had, likewise, orders to hold their militia in readiness to render assistance in case of insurrections in the State of New York.

So perilous appeared the condition of affairs

to residents up the river, that John Jay, a member of the New York Convention, and one of the secret committee for the defense of the Hudson, applied for leave of absence, that he might remove his aged parents to a place of safety. A letter from him to Edward Rutledge, of the Board of War, contains this remarkable sentence: "I wish our army well stationed in the Highlands, and all the lower country desolated; we might then bid defiance to all the further efforts of the enemy in that quarter."

Nor was this a random or despairing wish. It shows a brave spirit of a leading civilian of the day, and the sacrifices that true patriots were disposed to make in the cause of independence.

But a few days previously he had held the following language to Gouverneur Morris, chairman of a special committee: "Had I been vested with absolute power in this State, I have often said, and still think, that I would last spring have desolated all *Long Island*, *Staten Island*, the city and county of *New York*, and all that part of the county of *Westchester* which lies below the mountains. I would then have stationed the main body of the army in the mountains on the east, and eight or ten thousand men in the Highlands on the west

side of the river. I would have directed the river at *Fort Montgomery*, which is nearly at the southern extremity of the mountains, to be so shallowed as to afford only depth sufficient for an *Albany* sloop, and all the southern passes and defiles in the mountains to be strongly fortified. Nor do I think the shallowing of the river a romantic scheme. Rocky mountains rise immediately from the shores. The breadth is not very great, though the depth is. But what cannot eight or ten thousand men, well worked, effect? According to this plan of defense the State would be absolutely impregnable against all the world, on the seaside, and would have nothing to fear except from the way of the lake. Should the enemy gain the river, even below the mountains, I think I foresee that a retreat would become necessary, and I can't forbear wishing that a desire of saving a few acres may not lead us into difficulties." *

Three days after this remarkable letter was written, the enemy's ships did gain the river; and two days afterwards, October 11th, Reed, the adjutant-general, the confidant of Washington's councils, writes to his wife from Harlem Heights: "My most sanguine views do not extend further than keeping our ground

* *Am. Archives*, 5th Series, vol. ii., 921.

here till this campaign closes. If the enemy incline to press us, it is resolved to risk an engagement, for, if we cannot fight them on this ground, we can on none in America. The ships are the only circumstances unfavorable to us here."

On the same day that this letter was written, a small vessel, sloop-rigged, with a topsail, was descried from Fort Washington, coming down the river with a fresh breeze. It was suspected by those on the look-out to be one of the British tenders, and they gave it a shot from a twelve-pounder. Their aim was unfortunately too true. Three of the crew were killed and the captain wounded. It proved to be Washington's yacht, which had run up the river previously to the enemy's ships, and was now on its return. *

* Heath's *Memoirs.*

Chapter XXI.

Lee Expected in Camp—His Letter of Advice to the President of Congress—The Enemy at Throg's Neck — Washington's Arrangements — Rides to Throg's Neck—The Enemy Brought to a Stand—Military Movements—Arrival of Lee—A Command Assigned to him—Criticises the Conduct of Congress and the Army—Council of War—The Army to Move to the Mainland—Fort Washington to be Kept up.

"IF General Lee should be in Philadelphia," writes John Jay to Rutledge, "pray hasten his departure—he is much wanted at New York." The successes of Lee at the south were contrasted by many with the defeat on Long Island, and evacuation of New York, and they began to consider him the main hope of the army. Hazard, the postmaster, writing from Harlem Heights to General Gates on the 11th, laments it as a misfortune that Lee should have been to the southward for several months past, but adds cheeringly, "he is expected here to-day."

Joseph Trumbull, the commissary-general, also writes to Gates under the same date: "General Lee is to be here this evening. He left Philadelphia on the 8th."

Lee, the object of so many hopes, was actually in the Jerseys, on his way to the camp. He writes from Amboy on the 12th, to the President of Congress, informing him that the Hessians, encamped opposite on Staten Island, had disappeared on the preceding night, quitting the island entirely, and some great measure was believed to be in agitation. "I am confident," writes he, "they will not attack General Washington's lines; such a measure is too absurd for a man of Mr. Howe's genius; and unless they have received flattering accounts from Burgoyne, that he will be able to effectuate a junction (which I conceive they have not), they will no longer remain kicking their heels at New York. They will put the place in a respectable state of defense, which, with their command of the waters, may be easily done, leave four or five thousand men, and direct their operations to a more decisive object. They will infallibly proceed either immediately up the river Delaware with their whole troops, or, what is more probable, land somewhere about South Amboy or Shrewsbury, and march straight to Trenton or Burlington. On the

supposition that this will be the case, what are we to do? What force have we? What means have we to prevent their possessing themselves of Philadelphia? General Washington's army cannot possibly keep pace with them. The length of his route is not only infinitely greater, but his obstructions almost insuperable. In short, before he could cross Hudson River, they might be lodged and strongly fortified on both banks of the Delaware. . . . For Heaven's sake arouse yourselves! For Heaven's sake let ten thousand men be immediately assembled, and stationed somewhere about Trenton. In my opinion, your whole depends upon it. I set out immediately for headquarters, where I shall communicate my apprehension that such will be the next operation of the enemy, and urge the expediency of sparing a part of the army (if he has any to spare) for this object." *

On the very morning that Lee was writing this letter at Amboy, Washington received intelligence by express from General Heath, stationed above King's Bridge, that the enemy were landing with artillery on Throg's Neck † in the Sound, about nine miles from the camp.

* *Am. Archives*, 5th Series, ii., 1008.

† Properly Throck's Neck, from Throckmorton, the name of the original proprietor.

Washington surmised that Howe was pursuing his original plan of getting into the rear of the American army, cutting off its supplies, which were chiefly derived from the East, and interrupting its communication with the main country. Officers were ordered to their alarm posts, and the troops to be ready, under arms, to act as occasion might require. Word, at the same time, was sent to General Heath, to dispose of the troops on his side of King's Bridge, and of two militia regiments posted on the banks of Harlem River opposite the camp, in such manner as he should think necessary.

Having made all his arrangements as promptly as possible, Washington mounted his horse, and rode over towards Throg's Neck to reconnoiter.

Throg's Neck is a peninsula in Westchester County, stretching upwards of two miles into the Sound. It was separated from the mainland by a narrow creek, and a marsh, and was surrounded by water every high tide. A bridge across a creek connecting with a ruined causeway across the marsh, led to the mainland, and the upper end of the creek was fordable at low water. Early in the morning, eighty or ninety boats full of men had stood up the Sound from Montresor's Island, and Long Island, and had landed troops to the number of

four thousand on Throg's Point, the extremity of the Neck. Thence their advance pushed forward toward the causeway and bridge, to secure that pass to the mainland. General Heath had been too rapid for them. Colonel Hand and his Philadelphia riflemen, the same who had checked the British advance on Long Island, had taken up the planks of the bridge, and posted themselves opposite the end of the causeway, whence they commenced firing with their rifles. They were soon reinforced by Colonel Prescott, of Bunker's Hill renown, with his regiment, and Lieutenant Bryant of the artillery, with a three-pounder. Checked at this pass, the British moved toward the head of the creek; here they found the Americans in possession of the ford, where they were reinforced by Colonel Graham, of the New York line, with his regiment, and Lieutenant Jackson of the artillery, with a six-pounder. These skilful dispositions of his troops by General Heath had brought the enemy to a stand. By the time Washington arrived in the vicinity, the British had encamped on the Neck; the riflemen and yagers keeping up a scattering fire at each other across the marsh; and Captain Bryant now and then saluting the enemy with his field-piece.

Having surveyed the ground, Washington

ordered works to be thrown up at the passes from the Neck to the mainland. The British also threw up a work at the end of the causeway. In the afternoon nine ships, with a great number of schooners, sloops, and flat-bottomed boats full of men, passed through Hell Gate, towards Throg's Point; and information received from two deserters, gave Washington reason to believe that the greater part of the enemy's forces were gathering in that quarter. General McDougall's brigade, in which were Colonel Smallwood and the independent companies, was sent in the evening to strengthen Heath's division at King's Bridge, and to throw up works opposite the ford of Harlem River. Greene, who had heard of the landing of the enemy at Throg's Neck, wrote over to Washington, from Fort Constitution, informing him that he had three brigades ready to join him if required. "If the troops are wanted over your side," said he, "or likely to be so, they should be got over in the latter part of the night, as the shipping may move up from below, and impede, if not totally stop the troops from passing. The tents upon Staten Island," he added, "had all been struck, as far as could be ascertained." It was plain the whole scene of action was changing.

On the 14th, General Lee arrived in camp, where he was welcomed as the harbinger of good luck. Washington was absent, visiting the posts beyond King's Bridge, and the passes leading from Throg's Neck; Lee immediately rode forth to join him. No one gave him a sincerer greeting than the commander-in-chief, who, diffident of his own military knowledge, had a high opinion of that of Lee. He immediately gave him command of the troops above King's Bridge, now the greatest part of the army, but desired that he would not exercise it for a day or two, until he had time to acquaint himself with the localities and arrangements of the post; Heath, in the interim, held the command.

Lee was evidently elevated by his successes at the South, and disposed to criticise disparagingly the military operations of other commanders. In a letter, written on the day of his arrival to his old associate in arms, General Gates, he condemns the position of the army, and censures Washington for submitting to the dictation of Congress, whose meddlesome instructions had produced it. "*Inter nos*," writes he, "the Congress seem to stumble every step. I do not mean one or two of the cattle, but the whole stable. I have been very free in delivering my opinion to them. In my

opinion General Washington is much to blame in not menacing 'em with resignation, unless they refrain from unhinging the army by their absurd interference.

"Keep us Ticonderoga; much depends upon it. We ought to have an army in the Delaware. I have roared it in the ears of Congress, but *earent auribus*. Adieu, my dear friend; if we do meet again—why, we shall smile." *

In the meantime, Congress, on the 11th of October, having heard of the ingress of the *Phœnix*, *Roebuck*, and *Tartar*, passed a resolution that General Washington be desired, if it be practicable, by every art, and at whatever expense, to obstruct effectually the navigation of the North River between Fort Washington and Fort Constitution, as well to prevent the regress of the enemy's vessels lately gone up as to hinder them from receiving succors.

Under so many conflicting circumstances, Washington held a council of war on the 16th, at Lee's headquarters, at which all the major-generals were present, excepting Greene, and all the brigadiers, as well as Colonel Knox, who commanded the artillery. Letters from the Convention and from individual members of it were read, concerning the turbulence of the disaffected in the upper parts of the State;

* *Am. Archives*, 5th Series, ii., 1038.

intelligence gained from deserters was likewise stated, showing the intention of the enemy to surround the camp. The policy was then discussed of remaining in their present position on Manhattan Island, and awaiting there the menaced attack: the strength of the position was urged; its being well fortified, and extremely difficult of access. Lee, in reply, scoffed at the idea of a position being good merely because its approaches were difficult. How could they think of holding a position where the enemy were so strong in front and rear; where ships had the command of the water on each side, and where King's Bridge was their only pass by which to escape from being wholly inclosed? Had not their recent experience on Long Island and at New York taught them the danger of such positions? "For my part," said he, "I would have nothing to do with the islands to which you have been clinging so pertinaciously—I would give Mr. Howe a fee-simple of them."

"After much consideration and debate," says the record of the council, "the following question was stated: Whether (it having appeared that the obstructions in the North River have proved insufficient, and that the enemy's whole force is now in our rear on Frog Point) it is now deemed possible, in our situation, to

prevent the enemy from cutting off the communication with the country, and compelling us to fight them at all disadvantages or surrender prisoners at discretion?"

All agreed, with but one dissenting voice, that it was not possible to prevent the communication from being cut off, and that one of the consequences mentioned in the question must follow.

The dissenting voice was that of General George Clinton, a brave downright man, but little versed in the science of warfare. He could not comprehend the policy of abandoning so strong a position; they were equal in number to the enemy, and, as they must fight them somewhere, could do it to more advantage there than anywhere else. Clinton felt as a guardian of the Hudson and the upper country, and wished to meet the enemy, as it were, at the very threshold.

As the resolve of Congress seemed imperative with regard to Fort Washington, that post, it was agreed, should be "retained as long as possible."

A strong garrison was accordingly placed in it, composed chiefly of troops from Magaw's and Shee's Pennsylvania regiments, the latter under Lieutenant-Colonel Lambert Cadwalader, of Philadelphia. Shee having obtained leave

of absence, Colonel Magaw was put in command of the post, and solemnly charged by Washington to defend it to the last extremity. The name of the opposite post on the Jersey shore, where Greene was stationed, was changed from Fort Constitution to Fort Lee, in honor of the general. Lee, in fact, was the military idol of the day. Even the family of the commander-in-chief joined in paying him homage. Colonel Tench Tilghman, Washington's aide-de-camp, in a letter to a friend, writes: "You ask if General Lee is in health, and our people bold. I answer both in the affirmative. His appearance amongst us has contributed not a little to the latter."

Chapter XXII.

Army Arrangements—Washington at White Plains—The Enemy at Throg's Point—Skirmish of Colonel Glover—Attempt to Surprise Rogers, the Renegade—Troopers in a Rough Country—Alarms at White Plains—Cannonading of Ships at Fort Washington—March of Lee—Fortified Camp at White Plains—Reconnoitering—The Affair at Chatterton's Hill—Relative Situation of the Armies—Change of Position—Contrast of the Appearance of the Troops—George Clinton's Idea of Strategy—Movement of the British Army—Incendiaries at White Plains.

PREVIOUS to decamping from Manhattan Island, Washington formed four divisions of the army, which were respectively assigned to Generals Lee, Heath, Sullivan (recently obtained in exchange for General Prescott), and Lincoln. Lee was stationed on Valentine's Hill on the mainland, immediately opposite King's Bridge, to cover the transportation across it of the military stores and heavy baggage. The other

divisions were to form a chain of fortified posts, extending about thirteen miles along a ridge of hills on the west side of the Bronx, from Lee's camp up to the village of White Plains.

Washington's headquarters continued to be on Harlem Heights for several days, during which time he was continually in the saddle, riding about a broken, woody, and half wild country, forming posts, and choosing sites for breastworks and redoubts. By his skilful disposition of the army, it was protected in its whole length by the Bronx, a narrow but deep stream, fringed with trees, which ran along the foot of the ridge; at the same time his troops faced and outflanked the enemy, and covered the roads along which the stores and baggage had to be transported. On the 21st, he shifted his headquarters to Valentine's Hill, and on the 23d to White Plains, where he stationed himself in a fortified camp.

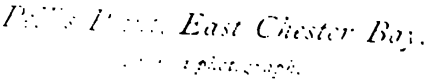
While he was thus incessantly in action, General, now Sir William Howe (having recently, in reward for his services, been made a knight companion of the Bath), remained for six days passive in his camp on Throg's Point awaiting the arrival of supplies and reinforcements, instead of pushing across to the Hudson, and throwing himself between Washington's army and the upper country. His

inaction lost him a golden opportunity. By the time his supplies arrived, the Americans had broken up the causeway leading to the mainland, and taken positions too strong to be easily forced.

Finding himself headed in this direction, Sir William re-embarked part of his troops in flat boats on the 18th, crossed Eastchester Bay, and landed on Pell's Point, at the mouth of Hutchinson's River. Here he was joined in a few hours by the main body, with the baggage and artillery, and proceeded through the manor of Pelham towards New Rochelle; still with a view to get above Washington's army.

In their march, the British were waylaid and harassed by Colonel Glover of Massachusetts, with his own, Reed's and Shepard's regiments of infantry. Twice the British advance guard were thrown into confusion and driven back with severe loss, by a sharp fire from behind stone fences. A third time they advanced in solid columns. The Americans gave them repeated volleys, and then retreated with the loss of eight killed and thirteen wounded, among whom was Colonel Shepard. Colonel Glover, and the officers and soldiers who were with him in this skirmish, received the public thanks of Washington for their merit and good behavior.

On the 21st, General Howe was encamped



Pell's Point, East Chester Bay.

[illegible] photograph.

While in this neighborhood, Howe was reinforced by a second division of Hessians under General Knyphausen, and a regiment of Waldeckers, both of which had recently arrived in New York. He was joined, also, by the whole of the seventeenth light dragoons, and a part of the sixteenth, which had arrived on the 3d instant from Ireland, with Lieutenant-Colonel (afterwards Earl) Harcourt. Some of their horses had been brought with them across the sea, others had been procured since their arrival.

The Americans at first regarded these troopers with great dread. Washington, therefore, took pains to convince them, that in a rough, broken country, like the present, full of stone fences, no troops were so inefficient as cavalry. They could be waylaid and picked off by sharpshooters from behind walls and thickets, while they could not leave the road to pursue their covert foe.

Further to inspirit them against this new enemy, he proclaimed, in general orders, a reward of one hundred dollars for every trooper brought in with his horse and accoutrements, and so on, in proportion to the completeness of the capture.

On the 25th, about two o'clock in the afternoon, intelligence was brought to headquarters

that three or four detachments of the enemy were on the march, within four miles of the camp, and the main army following in columns. The drums beat to arms; the men were ordered to their posts; an attack was expected. The day passed away, however, without any demonstration of the enemy. Howe detached none of his force on lateral expeditions, evidently meditating a general engagement. To prepare for it, Washington drew all his troops from the posts along the Bronx into the fortified camp at White Plains. Here everything remained quiet but expectant, throughout the 26th. In the morning of the 27th, which was Sunday, the heavy booming of cannon was heard from a distance, seemingly in the direction of Fort Washington. Scouts galloped off to gain intelligence. We will anticipate their report.

Two of the British frigates, at seven o'clock in the morning, had moved up the Hudson, and come to anchor near Burdett's Ferry, below the Morris House, Washington's old headquarters, apparently with the intention of stopping the ferry, and cutting off the communication between Fort Lee and Fort Washington. At the same time, troops made their appearance on Harlem Plains, where Lord Percy held command. Colonel Morgan imme-

diately manned the lines with troops from the garrison of Fort Washington. The ships opened a fire to enfilade and dislodge them. A barbette battery on the cliffs of the Jersey shore, left of the ferry, fired down upon the frigates, but with little effect. Colonel Magaw got down an eighteen-pounder to the lines near the Morris House, and fired fifty or sixty rounds, two balls at a time. Two eighteen-pounders were likewise brought down from Fort Lee, and planted opposite the ships. By the fire from both shores, they were hulled repeatedly.

It was the thundering of these cannonades which had reached Washington's camp at White Plains, and even startled the Highlands of the Hudson. The ships soon hoisted all sail. The foremost slipped her cable, and appeared to be in the greatest confusion. She could make no way, though towed by two boats. The other ship seeing her distress, sent two barges to her assistance, and by the four boats she was dragged out of reach of the American fire, her pumps going all the time, "Had the tide been flood one half hour longer," writes General Greene, "we should have sunk her."

At the time that the fire from the ships began, Lord Percy brought up his field-pieces

and mortars, and made an attack upon the lines. He was resolutely answered by the troops sent down from Fort Washington, and several Hessians were killed. An occasional firing was kept up until the evening, when the ships fell down the river, and the troops which had advanced on Harlem Plains drew within their lines again.

"We take this day's movement to be only a feint," writes one of the garrison at Fort Lee; "at any rate, it is little honorable to the redcoats." Its chief effect was to startle the distant camp, and astound a quiet country with the thundering din of war.

The celebrated Thomas Paine, author of *The Rights of Man*, and other political works, was a spectator of the affair from the rocky summit of the Palisades, on the Jersey shore.

While these things were passing at Fort Washington, Lee had struck his tents, and with the rear division, eight thousand strong, the baggage and artillery, and a train of wagons four miles long, laden with stores and ammunition, was lumbering along the rough country roads to join the main army. It was not until Monday morning, after being on the road all night, that he arrived at White Plains.

Washington's camp was situated on high ground, facing the east. The right wing

stretched towards the south along a rocky hill, at the foot of which the Bronx, making an elbow, protected it in flank and rear. The left wing rested on a small, deep lake among the hills. The camp was strongly entrenched in front.

About a quarter of a mile to the right of the camp, and separated from the height on which it stood by the Bronx and a marshy interval, was a corresponding height called Chatterton's Hill. As this partly commanded the right flank, and as the intervening bend of the Bronx was easily passable, Washington had stationed on its summit a militia regiment.

The whole encampment was a temporary one, to be changed as soon as the military stores collected there could be removed; and now that General Lee was arrived, Washington rode out with him, and other general officers who were off duty, to reconnoiter a height which appeared more eligible. When arrived at it, Lee pointed to another on the north, still more commanding. "Yonder," said he, "is the ground we ought to occupy." "Let us go, then, and view it," replied Washington. They were gently riding in that direction, when a trooper came spurring up his panting horse. "The British are in the camp, sir!" cried he. "Then, gentlemen," said Washington, "we

have other business to attend to than reconnoitering." Putting spurs to his horse, he set off for the camp at full gallop, the others spurring after him.

Arrived at headquarters, he was informed by Adjutant-General Reed, that the picket guards had all been driven in, and the enemy were advancing; but that the whole American army was posted in order of battle. "Gentlemen," said Washington, turning calmly to his companions, "you will return to your respective posts, and do the best you can."

Apprehensive that the enemy might attempt to get possession of Chatterton's Hill, he detached Colonel Haslet with his Delaware regiment, to reinforce the militia posted there. To these he soon added General McDougall's brigade, composed of Smallwood's Marylanders, Ritzema's New Yorkers, and two other regiments. These were much reduced by sickness and absence. General McDougall had command of the whole force upon the hill, which did not exceed 1,600 men.

These dispositions were scarcely made, when the enemy appeared glistening on the high grounds beyond the village of White Plains. They advanced in two columns, the right commanded by Sir Henry Clinton, the left by the Hessian general, De Heister. There was also

a troop of horse; so formidable in the inexperienced eyes of the Americans. "It was a brilliant but formidable sight," writes Heath in his memoirs. "The sun shone bright, their arms glittered; and perhaps troops never were shown to more advantage."

For a time they halted in a wheat field, behind a rising ground, and the general officers rode up in the centre to hold a consultation. Washington supposed they were preparing to attack him in front, and such indeed was their intention; but the commanding height of Chatterton's Hill had caught Sir William's eye, and he determined first to get possession of it.

Colonel Rahl was accordingly detached with a brigade of Hessians, to make a circuit southwardly, round a piece of wood, cross the Bronx about a quarter of a mile below, and ascend the south side of the hill; while General Leslie, with a large force, British and Hessian, should advance directly in front, throw a bridge across the stream, and charge up the hill.

A furious cannonade was now opened by the British from fifteen or twenty pieces of artillery, placed on high ground opposite the hill; under cover of which, the troops of General Leslie hastened to construct the bridge. In so doing, they were severely galled by two field-pieces,

planted on a ledge of rock on Chatterton's Hill, and in charge of Alexander Hamilton, the youthful captain of artillery. Smallwood's Maryland battalion, also, kept up a sharp fire of small arms.

As soon as the bridge was finished, the British and Hessians under Leslie rushed over it, formed and charged up the hill to take Hamilton's two field-pieces. Three times the two field-pieces were discharged, ploughing the ascending columns from hill-top to river, while Smallwood's "blue and buff" Marylanders kept up their volleys of musketry.

In the meantime Rahl and his Hessian brigade forded the Bronx lower down, pushed up the south side of the hill, and endeavored to turn McDougall's right flank. The militia gave the general but little support. They had been dismayed at the opening of the engagement by a shot from a British cannon, which wounded one of them in the thigh, and nearly put the whole to flight. It was with the utmost difficulty McDougall had rallied them, and posted them behind a stone wall. Here they did some service, until a troop of British cavalry, having gained the crest of the hill, came on, brandishing their sabres. At their first charge the militia gave a random, scattering fire, then broke, and fled in complete confusion.

A brave stand was made on the summit of the hill by Haslet, Ritzema, and Smallwood, with their troops. Twice they repulsed horse and foot, British and Hessians, until, cramped for room and greatly outnumbered, they slowly and sullenly retreated down the north side of the hill, where there was a bridge across the Bronx. Smallwood remained upon the ground for some time after the retreat had begun, and received two flesh wounds, one in the hip, the other through the arm. At the bridge over the Bronx, the retreating troops were met by General Putnam, who was coming to their assistance with Beall's brigade. In the rear of this they marched back into the camp.

The loss on both sides, in this short but severe action, was nearly equal. That of the Americans was between three and four hundred men, killed, wounded, and taken prisoners. At first it was thought to be much more, many of the militia and a few of the regulars being counted as lost, who had scattered themselves among the hills, but afterwards returned to headquarters.

The British army now rested with their left wing on the hill they had just taken, and which they were busy intrenching. They were extending their right wing to the left of the American lines so that their two wings and

centre formed nearly a semicircle. It was evidently their design to outflank the American camp, and get in the rear of it. The day, however, being far advanced, was suffered to pass without any further attack ; but the morrow was looked forward to for a deadly conflict. Washington availed himself of this interval to have the sick and wounded, and as much of the stores as possible, removed from the camp. "The two armies," says General Heath in his memoirs, "lay looking at each other, within long cannon shot. In the night-time the British lighted up a vast number of fires, the weather growing pretty cold. These fires, some on the level ground, some at the foot of the hills, and at all distances to their brows, some of which were lofty, seemed to the eye to mix with the stars. The American side doubtless exhibited to them a similar appearance."

During this anxious night, Washington was assiduously occupied throwing back his right wing to stronger ground ; doubling his intrenchments and constructing three redoubts, with a line in front, on the summit of his post. These works were principally intended for defense against small-arms, and were thrown up with a rapidity that to the enemy must have savored of magic. They were, in fact, made of the

stalks of Indian corn or maize taken from a neighboring corn-field, and pulled up with the earth clinging in masses to the large roots. "The roots of the stalks," says Heath, "and earth on them placed in the face of the works, answered the purpose of sods and fascines. The tops being placed inwards, as the loose earth was thrown upon them, became as so many trees to the work, which was carried up with a despatch scarcely conceivable.

In the morning of the 29th, when Howe beheld how greatly Washington had improved his position and strengthened it, by what appeared to be solidly constructed works, he postponed his meditated assault, ordered up Lord Percy from Harlem with the fourth brigade and two battalions of the sixth, and proceeded to throw up lines and redoubts in front of the American camp, as if preparing to cannonade it. As the enemy were endeavoring to outflank him, especially on his right wing, Washington apprehended one of their objects might be to advance a part of their force and seize on Pine's Bridge over Croton River, which would cut off his communication with the upper country. General Beall, with three Maryland regiments, was sent off with all expedition to secure that pass. It was Washington's idea that, having possession of

Croton River and the passes in the Highlands, his army would be safe from further pursuit, and have time to repose after its late excessive fatigue, and would be fresh, and ready to harass the enemy should they think fit to winter up the country.

At present nothing could exceed the war-worn condition of the troops, unseasoned as they were to this kind of service. A scornful letter, written at this time by a British officer to his friend in London, gives a picture of the ragged plight to which they were reduced, in this rainy and inclement season. "The rebel army are in so wretched a condition as to clothing and accoutrements, that I believe no nation ever saw such a set of tatterdemalions. There are few coats among them but what are out at the elbows, and in a whole regiment there is scarce a pair of breeches. Judge, then, how they must be pinched by a winter's campaign. We, who are warmly clothed and well equipped, already feel it severely; for it is even now much colder than I ever felt it in England."

Alas for the poor, half-naked, weather-beaten patriots, who had to cope with these well-fed, well-clad, well-appointed mercenaries! A letter written at the very same date (October 31), by General George Clinton, shows what, in their forlorn plight, they had to grapple with.

"We had reason," writes he, "to apprehend an attack last night, or by daylight this morning. Our lines were manned all night in consequence; and a most horrid night it was to lay in cold trenches. Uncovered as we are, daily on fatigue, making redoubts, fleches, abatis, and retreating from them and the little temporary huts made for our comfort before they are all finished, I fear will ultimately destroy our army without fighting." * "However," adds he, honestly, "I would not be understood to condemn measures. They may be right for aught I know. I do not understand much of the refined art of war; it is said to consist in stratagem and deception." In a previous letter to the same friend, in a moment of hurry and alarm, he writes, "Pray let Mrs. Clinton know that I am well, and that she need not be uneasy about me. It would be too much honor to die in so good a cause."

Clinton, as we have before intimated, was an honest and ardent patriot, of resolute spirit, and plain, direct good sense; but an inexperienced soldier. His main idea of warfare was straightforward fighting; and he was greatly perplexed by the continual strategy which Washington's situation required. One of the aides-de-camp

* George Clinton to John McKesson, October 31. *Am. Archives*, 5th Series, ii., 1312.

of the latter had a truer notion on the subject. "The campaign hitherto," said he, "has been a fair trial of generalship, in which I flatter myself we have had the advantage. If we, with our motley army, can keep Mr. Howe at bay, I think we shall make no contemptible military figure." *

On the night of the 31st, Washington made another of those moves which perplexed the worthy Clinton. In the course of the night he shifted his whole position, set fire to the barns and out-houses containing forage and stores, which there was no time to remove, and leaving a strong rear-guard on the heights and in the neighboring woods, retired with his main army a distance of five miles, among the high, rocky hills about Northcastle. Here he immediately set to work to intrench and fortify himself; his policy at this time being, as he used to say, "to fight with the spade and mattock."

General Howe did not attempt to dislodge him from this fastness. He at one time ordered an attack on the rear-guard, but a violent rain prevented it, and for two or three days he remained seemingly inactive. "All matters are as quiet as if the enemy were one hundred miles distant from us," writes one of

* Tench Tilghman to William Duer, October 31.

Washington's aides on the 2d of November. During the night of the 4th this quiet was interrupted. A mysterious sound was heard in the direction of the British camp, like the rumbling of wagons and artillery. At daybreak the meaning of it was discovered. The enemy were decamping. Long trains were observed defiling across the hilly country, along the roads leading to Dobbs Ferry on the Hudson. The movement continued for three successive days, until their whole force, British and Hessians, disappeared from White Plains.

The night after their departure a party of Americans, heated with liquor, set fire to the court-house and other edifices in the village, as if they had belonged to the enemy; an outrage which called forth a general order from Washington, expressive of his indignation, and threatening the perpetrators with signal punishment when detected. We notice this matter, because in British accounts, the burning of those buildings had been charged upon Washington himself; being, no doubt, confounded with the burning of the barns and out-houses ordered by him on shifting his encampment.

Chapter XXIII.

Conjectures as to the Intentions of the Enemy—Consequent Precautions—Correspondence with Greene Respecting Fort Washington—Distribution of the Army—Lee Left in Command at Northcastle—Instructions to him—Washington at Peekskill—Visits to the Posts in the Highlands.

VARIOUS were the speculations at headquarters on the sudden movement of the enemy. Washington writes to General William Livingston (now governor of the Jerseys): "They have gone towards the North River and King's Bridge. Some suppose they are going into winter quarters, and will sit down in New York without doing more than investing Fort Washington. I cannot subscribe wholly to this opinion myself. That they will invest Fort Washington, is a matter of which there can be no doubt; and I think there is a strong probability that General Howe will detach a part of his force to

account, not without being considerably shattered by the batteries.

Informed of these facts, Washington wrote to Greene on the 8th: "If we cannot prevent vessels from passing up the river, and the enemy are possessed of all the surrounding country, what valuable purpose can it answer to hold a post from which the expected benefit cannot be had? I am, therefore, inclined to think that it will not be prudent to hazard the men and stores at Mount Washington; but, as you are on the spot, I leave it to you to give such orders as to evacuating Mount Washington as you may judge best, and so far revoking the orders given to Colonel Magaw, to defend it to the last."

Accounts had been received at headquarters of a considerable movement on the preceding evening (Nov. 7th), among the enemy's boats at Dobbs Ferry, with the intention, it was said, of penetrating the Jerseys, and falling down upon Fort Lee. Washington, therefore, in the same letter directed Greene to have all the stores not necessary to the defense removed immediately, and to destroy all the stock, the hay and grain, in the neighborhood, which the owners refused to remove. "Experience has shown," adds he, "that a contrary conduct is not of the least advantage to the poor inhab-

to cross the river; it might only be a feint to mislead; still, as a precaution, he had ordered troops up from the flying camp, and was posting them opposite Dobbs Ferry, and at other passes where a landing might be attempted; the whole being under the command of General Mercer.

Affairs at Fort Washington soon settled the question of the enemy's intentions with regard to it. Lord Percy took his station with a body of troops before the lines to the south. Knyphausen advanced on the north. The Americans had previously abandoned Fort Independence, burnt its barracks, and removed the stores and cannon. Crossing King's Bridge, Knyphausen took a position between it and Fort Washington. The approach to the fort, on this side, was exceedingly steep and rocky; as, indeed, were all its approaches excepting that on the south, where the country was more open, and the ascent gradual. The fort could not hold within its walls above one thousand men; the rest of the troops were distributed about the lines and outworks. While the fort was thus menaced, the chevaux-de-frise had again proved inefficient. On the night of the 5th, a frigate and two transports, bound up to Dobbs Ferry, with supplies for Howe's army, had broken through; though according to Greene's

account, not without being considerably shattered by the batteries.

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itants, from whom all their effects of every kind are taken without distinction and without the least satisfaction."

Greene, in reply (Nov. 9th), adhered with tenacity to the policy of maintaining Fort Washington. "The enemy," said he, "must invest it with double the number of men required for its defense. They must keep troops at King's Bridge, to cut off all communication with the country, and in considerable force, for fear of an attack." He did not consider the fort in immediate danger. Colonel Magaw thought it would take the enemy until the end of December to carry it. In the meantime, the garrison could at any time be brought off, and even the stores removed, should matters grow desperate. If the enemy should not find it an object of importance, they would not trouble themselves about it; if they should, it would be a proof that they felt an injury from its being maintained. The giving it up would open for them a free communication with the country by the way of King's Bridge.* It is doubtful when or where Washington received this letter, as he left the camp at Northcastle at eleven o'clock of the following morning. There being still considerable uncertainty as to the intentions of the enemy, all his arrangements were made

* *Am. Archives*, 5th Series, iii., 618.

accordingly. All the troops belonging to the States west of the Hudson, were to be stationed in the Jerseys, under command of General Putnam. Lord Stirling had already been sent forward with the Maryland and Virginia troops to Peekskill, to cross the river at King's Ferry. Another division, composed of Connecticut and Massachusetts troops, under General Heath, was to co-operate with the brigade of New York militia under General George Clinton, in securing the Highland posts on both sides of the river.

The troops which would remain at Northcastle after the departure of Heath and his division, were to be commanded by Lee. Washington's letter of instructions to that general is characterized by his own modesty, and his deference for Lee's superior military experience. He suggests, rather than orders, yet his letter is sufficiently explicit. "A little time now," writes he, "must manifest the enemy's designs, and point out to you the measures proper to be pursued by that part of the army under your command. I shall give no directions, therefore, on this head, having the most entire confidence in your judgment and military exertions. One thing, however, I will suggest, namely, that the appearance of embarking troops for the Jerseys may be intended as a

feint to weaken us, and render the post we now hold more vulnerable, or the enemy may find that troops are assembled with more expedition, and in greater numbers, than they expected, on the Jersey shore, to oppose them; and, as it is possible, from one or other of these motives, that they may yet pay the party under your command a visit, it will be unnecessary, I am persuaded, to recommend to you the propriety of putting this post, if you stay at it, into a proper posture of defense, and guarding against surprises. But I would recommend it to your consideration whether, under the suggestion above, your retiring to Croton Bridge, and some strong post still more easterly (covering the passes through the Highlands), may not be more advisable than to run the hazard of an attack with unequal numbers. At any rate, I think all your baggage and stores, except such as are necessary for immediate use, ought to be to the northward of Croton River. . . . You will consider the post at Croton's (or Pine's) Bridge as under your immediate care. . . . If the enemy should remove the whole, or the greater part of their force to the west side of Hudson's River, I have no doubt of your following with all possible despatch, leaving the militia and invalids to cover the frontiers of Connecticut in case of need."

We have been minute in stating these matters, from their bearing on subsequent operations.

On the 10th of November Washington left the camp at Northcastle at 11 o'clock, and arrived at Peekskill at sunset; whither General Heath, with his division, had preceded him by a few hours. Lord Stirling was there, likewise, having effected the transportation of the Maryland and Virginia troops across the river, and landed them at the ferry south of Stony Point; though a better landing was subsequently found north of the point. His lordship had thrown out a scouting party in the advance, and a hundred men to take possession of a gap in the mountain, through which a road passed toward the Jerseys.

Washington was now at the entrance of the Highlands, that grand defile of the Hudson, the object of so much precaution and solicitude. On the following morning, accompanied by Generals Heath, Stirling, James and George Clinton, Mifflin, and others, he made a military visit in boats to the Highland posts. Fort Montgomery was in a considerable state of forwardness, and a work in the vicinity was projected to co-operate with it. Fort Constitution commanded a sudden bend of the river, but Lord Stirling in his report of inspection had intimated that the fort itself was com-

manded by West Point opposite. A glance of the eye, without going on shore, was sufficient to convince Washington of the fact. A fortress subsequently erected on that point, has been considered the Key of the Highlands.

On the morning of the 12th, at an early hour, Washington rode out with General Heath to reconnoiter the east side of the Hudson, at the gorge of the Highlands. Henry Wisnor, in a report to the New York Convention, had mentioned a hill to the north of Peekskill, so situated, with the road winding along the side of it, that ten men on the top, by rolling down stones, might prevent ten thousand from passing. "I believe," said he, "nothing more need be done than to keep great quantities of stones at the different places where the troops must pass, if they attempt penetrating the mountains."

Near Robinson's Bridge, in this vicinity, about two miles from Peekskill, Washington chose a place where troops should be stationed to cover the south entrance into the mountains; and here, afterwards, was established an important military depot called Continental Village.

On the same day (12th), he wrote to General Lee, inclosing a copy of resolutions just received from Congress, respecting levies for the

new army, showing the importance of immediately beginning the recruiting service. If no commissioners arrived from Rhode Island, he was to appoint the officers recommended to that State by General Greene. "I cannot conclude," adds he, "without reminding you of the military and other stores about your encampment, and at Northcastle, and to press the removal of them above Croton Bridge, or such other places of security as you may think proper. General Howe, having sent no part of his force to Jersey yet, makes the measure more necessary, as he may turn his views another way, and attempt their destruction."

It was evidently Washington's desire that Lee should post himself, as soon as possible, beyond the Croton where he would be safe from surprise, and at hand to throw his troops promptly across the Hudson should the Jerseys be invaded.

Having made all these surveys and arrangements, Washington placed Heath in the general command of the Highlands, with written instructions to fortify the passes with all possible despatch, and directions how the troops were to be distributed on both sides of the river; and here we take occasion to give some personal notice of this trusty officer.

Heath was now in the fortieth year of his

age. Like many of the noted officers of the Revolution, he had been brought up in rural life, on an hereditary farm near Boston ; yet, according to his own account, though passionately fond of agricultural pursuits, he had also, almost from childhood, a great relish for military affairs, and had studied every treatise on the subject in the English language, so that he considered himself "fully acquainted with the *theory* of war, in all its branches and duties, from the private soldier to the commander-in-chief."

He describes himself to be of a middling stature, light complexion, very corpulent and bald-headed, so that the French officers who served in America, compared him, in person, to the Marquis of Granby.*

Such was the officer intrusted with the command of the Highland passes, and encamped at Peekskill, their portal. We shall find him faithful to his trust ; scrupulous in obeying the letter of his instructions ; but sturdy and punctilious in resisting any undue assumption of authority.

* Heath's *Memoirs.*

Chapter XXIV.

Affairs on Lake Champlain—Gates at Ticonderoga—Arnold's Flotilla—Military Preparations of Sir Guy Carleton at St. John's—Nautical Encounters—Gallant Conduct of Arnold and Waterbury—Carleton in Possession of Crown Point—His Return to Canada and Winter Quarters.

DURING his brief and busy sojourn at Peekskill, Washington received important intelligence from the northern army; especially that part of it on Lake Champlain, under the command of General Gates. A slight retrospect of affairs in that quarter is proper, before we proceed to narrate the eventful campaign in the Jerseys.

The preparations for the defense of Ticonderoga, and the nautical service on the lake, had met with difficulties at every step. At length, by the middle of August, a small flotilla was completed, composed of a sloop and a schooner each of twelve guns (six and four

pounders), two schooners mounting eight guns each, and five gondolas, each of three guns. The flotilla was subsequently augmented, and the command given by Gates to Arnold, in compliance with the advice of Washington; who had a high opinion of that officer's energy, intrepidity, and fertility in expedients.

Sir Guy Carleton, in the meantime, was straining every nerve for the approaching conflict. The successes of the British forces on the sea-board had excited the zealous rivalry of the forces in Canada. The commanders, newly arrived, were fearful the war might be brought to a close, before they could have an opportunity to share in the glory. Hence the ardor with which they encountered and vanquished obstacles which might otherwise have appeared insuperable. Vessels were brought from England in pieces and put together at St. John's, boats of various kinds and sizes were transported over land, or dragged up the rapids of the Sorel. The soldiers shared with the seamen in the toil. The Canadian farmers, also, were taken from their agricultural pursuits, and compelled to aid in these, to them, unprofitable labors. Sir Guy was full of hope and ardor. Should he get the command of Lakes Champlain and George, the northern part of New York would be at his mercy; be-

fore winter set in he might gain possession of Albany. He would then be able to co-operate with General Howe in severing and subduing the northern and southern provinces, and bringing the war to a speedy and triumphant close.

In despite of every exertion, three months elapsed before his armament was completed. Winter was fast approaching. Before it arrived, the success of his brilliant plan required that he should fight his way across Lake Champlain; carry the strong posts of Crown Point and Ticonderoga; traverse Lake George, and pursue a long and dangerous march through a wild and rugged country, beset with forests and morasses, to Albany. That was the first post to the southward where he expected to find rest and winter quarters for his troops.*

By the month of October, between twenty and thirty sail were afloat, and ready for action. The flag-ship (the *Inflexible*) mounted eighteen twelve-pounders; the rest were gunboats, a gondola and a flat-bottomed vessel called a radeau, and named the *Thunderer;* carrying a battery of six twenty-four and twelve six-pounders, besides howitzers. The gunboats mounted brass field-pieces and howitzers. Seven hundred seamen navigated the

* *Civil War in America*, vol. i., p. 212.

fleet; two hundred of them were volunteers from the transports. The guns were worked by detachments from the corps of artillery. In a word, according to British accounts, "no equipment of the kind was ever better appointed or more amply furnished with every kind of provision necessary for the intended service."*

Captain Pringle conducted the armament, but Sir Guy Carleton was too full of zeal, and too anxious for the event, not to head the enterprise; he accordingly took his station on the deck of the flag-ship. They made sail early in October, in quest of the American squadron, which was said to be abroad upon the lake. Arnold, however, being ignorant of the strength of the enemy, and unwilling to encounter a superior force in the open lake, had taken his post under cover of Valcour Island, in the upper part of a deep channel, or strait between that island and the mainland. His force consisted of three schooners, two sloops, three galleys and eight gondolas; carrying in all seventy guns, many of them eighteen pounders.

The British ships, sweeping past Cumberland Head with a fair wind and flowing sail on the morning of the 11th, had left the southern

* *Ibid.*, i., 211.

end of Valcour Island astern, when they discovered Arnold's flotilla anchored behind it, in a line extending across the strait so as not to be outflanked. They immediately hauled close to the wind, and tried to beat up into the channel. The wind, however, did not permit the largest of them to enter. Arnold took advantage of the circumstance. He was on board of the galley *Congress*, and, leaving the line, advanced, with two other galleys and the schooner *Royal Savage*, to attack the smaller vessels as they entered before the large ones could come up. About twelve o'clock the enemy's schooner *Carleton* opened a brisk fire upon the *Royal Savage* and the galleys. It was as briskly returned. Seeing the enemy's gunboats approaching, the Americans endeavored to return to the line. In so doing, the *Royal Savage* ran aground. Her crew set her on fire and abandoned her. In about an hour the British brought all their gunboats in a range across the lower part of the channel, within musket shot of the Americans, the schooner *Carleton* in the advance. They landed, also, a large number of Indians on the island, to keep up a galling fire from the shore upon the Americans with their rifles. The action now became general, and was severe and sanguinary. The Americans, finding themselves

thus hemmed in by a superior force, fought with desperation. Arnold pressed with his galley into the hottest of the fight. The *Congress* was hulled several times, received seven shots between wind and water, was shattered in mast and rigging, and many of the crew were killed or wounded. The ardor of Arnold increased with his danger. He cheered on his men by voice and example, often pointing the guns with his own hands. He was ably seconded by Brigadier-General Waterbury, in the *Washington* galley, which, like his own vessel, was terribly cut up. The contest lasted throughout the day. Carried on as it was within a narrow compass, and on a tranquil lake, almost every shot took effect. The fire of the Indians from the shore was less deadly than had been expected; but their whoops and yells, mingling with the rattling of the musketry, and the thundering of the cannon, increased the horrors of the scene. Volumes of smoke rose above the woody shores, which echoed with the unusual din of war, and for a time this lovely recess of a beautiful and peaceful lake was rendered a perfect pandemonium.

The evening drew nigh, yet the contest was undecided. Captain Pringle, after a consultation with Sir Guy Carleton, called off the smaller vessels which had been engaged, and

anchored his whole squadron in a line as near as possible to the Americans, so as to prevent their escape; trusting to capture the whole of them when the wind should prove favorable, so that he could bring his large vessels into action.

Arnold, however, sensible that with his inferior and crippled force all resistance would be unavailing, took advantage of a dark cloudy night, and a strong north wind; his vessels slipped silently through the enemy's line without being discovered, one following a light on the stern of the other: and by daylight they were out of sight. They had to anchor, however, at Schuyler's Island, about ten miles up the lake, to stop leaks and make repairs. Two of the gondolas were here sunk, being past remedy. About noon the retreat was resumed, but the wind had become adverse; and they made little progress. Arnold's galley, the *Congress*, the *Washington* galley and four gondolas, all which had suffered severely in the late fight, fell astern of the rest of the squadron in the course of the night. In the morning, when the sun lifted a fog which had covered the lake, they beheld the enemy within a few miles of them in full chase, while their own comrades were nearly out of sight, making the best of their way for Crown Point.

It was now an anxious trial of speed and

seamanship. Arnold, with the crippled relics of his squadron, managed by noon to get within a few leagues of Crown Point, when they were overtaken by the *Inflexible*, the *Carleton*, and the schooner *Maria* of 14 guns. As soon as they came up, they poured in a tremendous fire. The *Washington* galley, already shattered, and having lost most of her officers, was compelled to strike, and General Waterbury and the crew were taken prisoners. Arnold had now to bear the brunt of the action. For a long time he was engaged within musket shot with the *Inflexible*, and the two schooners, until his galley was reduced to a wreck and one third of the crew were killed. The gondolas were nearly in the same desperate condition; yet the men stood stoutly to their guns. Seeing resistance vain, Arnold determined that neither vessels nor crew should fall into the hands of the enemy. He ordered the gondolas to run on shore, in a small creek in the neighborhood, the men to set fire to them as soon as they grounded, to wade on shore with their muskets, and keep off the enemy until they were consumed. He did the same with his own galley; remaining on board of her until she was in flames, lest the enemy should get possession and strike his flag, which was kept flying to the last.

He now set off with his gallant crew, many of whom were wounded, by a road through the woods to Crown Point, where he arrived at night, narrowly escaping an Indian ambush. Two schooners, two galleys, one sloop, and one gondola, the remnant which had escaped of this squadron, were at anchor at the Point, and General Waterbury and most of his men arrived there the next day on parole. Seeing that the place must soon fall into the hands of the enemy, they set fire to the houses, destroyed everything they could not carry away, and embarking in the vessels made sail for Ticonderoga.

The loss of the Americans in these two actions is said to have been between eighty and ninety men; that of the British about forty. It is worthy of mention, that among the young officers in Sir Guy Carleton's squadron, was Edward Pellew, who afterwards rose to renown as Admiral Viscount Exmouth; celebrated, among other things, for his victory at Algiers.

The conduct of Arnold in these naval affairs gained him new laurels. He was extolled for the judgment with which he chose his position, and brought his vessels into action; for his masterly retreat, and for the self-sacrificing devotion with which he exposed himself to the overwhelming force of the enemy in covering the retreat of part of his flotilla.

Sir Guy Carleton took possession of the ruined works at Crown Point, where he was soon joined by the army. He made several movements by land and water, as if meditating an attack upon Ticonderoga; pushing strong detachments on both sides of the lake, which approached within a small distance of the fort, while one vessel appeared within cannon shot of a lower battery, sounding the depth of the channel, until a few shot obliged her to retire. General Gates, in the meantime, strengthened his works with incessant assiduity, and made every preparation for an obstinate defense. A strong easterly wind prevented the enemy's ships from advancing to attack the lines, and gave time for the arrival of reinforcements of militia to the garrison. It also afforded time for Sir Guy Carleton to cool in ardor, and calculate the chances and the value of success. The post, from its strength, and the apparent number and resolution of the garrison, could not be taken without great loss of life. If taken, the season was now too far advanced to think of passing Lake George, and exposing the army to the perils of a winter campaign in the inhospitable and impracticable wilds to the southward. Ticonderoga, too, could not be kept during the winter, so that the only result of the capture would be the reduction of the

works and the taking of some cannon; all which damage the Americans could remedy before the opening of the summer campaign. If, however, the defense should be obstinate, the British army, even if successful, might sustain a loss sufficient to cripple its operations in the coming year.*

These and other prudential reasons induced Carleton to give up all attempt upon the fortress at present; wherefore, re-embarking his troops, he returned to St. John's, and cantoned them in Canada for the winter. It was not until about the 1st of November that a reconnoitering party, sent out from Ticonderoga by General Gates, brought him back intelligence that Crown Point was abandoned by the enemy, and not a hostile sail in sight. All apprehensions of an attack upon Ticonderoga during the present year were at an end, and many of the troops stationed there were already on their march toward Albany.

Such was the purport of the news from the north, received by Washington at Peekskill. It relieved him for the present from all anxiety respecting affairs on Lake Champlain, and gave him the prospect of reinforcements from that quarter.

* *Civil War in America*, vol. i., p. 214.

Chapter XXV.

Washington Crosses the Hudson—Arrives at Fort Lee—Affairs at Fort Washington—Question about its Abandonment—Movements of Howe—The Fort Summoned to Surrender—Refusal of Colonel Magaw—The Fort Attacked—Capture of the Fort and Garrison—Comments of Washington on the State of Affairs.

ON the morning of the 12th of November, Washington crossed the Hudson, to the ferry below Stony Point, with the residue of the troops destined for the Jerseys. Far below were to be descried the *Phœnix*, the *Roebuck*, and the *Tartar*, at anchor in the broad waters of Haverstraw Bay and the Tappan Sea, guarding the lower ferries. The army, thus shut out from the nearer passes, was slowly winding its way by a circuitous route through the gap in the mountains, which Lord Stirling had secured. Leaving the troops which had just landed, to pursue the same route to the Hackensack, Washington, accompanied by

Colonel Reed, struck a direct course for Fort Lee, being anxious about affairs at Fort Washington. He arrived there on the following day, and found, to his disappointment, that General Greene had taken no measures for the evacuation of that fortress; but on the contrary, had reinforced it with a part of Colonel Durkee's regiment, and the regiment of Colonel Rawlings, so that its garrison now numbered upwards of two thousand men; a great part, however, were militia. Washington's orders for its evacuation had, in fact, been discretionary, leaving the execution of them to Greene's judgment, "as being on the spot." The latter had differed in opinion as to the policy of such a measure; and Colonel Magaw, who had charge of the fortress, was likewise confident it might be maintained.

Colonel Reed was of opposite counsels; but then he was personally interested in the safety of the garrison. It was composed almost entirely of Pennsylvania troops under Magaw and Lambert Cadwalader; excepting a small detachment of Maryland riflemen commanded by Otho H. Williams. They were his friends and neighbors, the remnant of the brave men who had suffered so severely under Atlee and Smallwood.* The fort was now invested on

* W. B. Reed's *Life of Reed*, i., 252.

all sides but one; and the troops under Howe which had been encamped at Dobbs Ferry, were said to be moving down toward it. Reed's solicitude was not shared by the garrison itself. Colonel Magaw, its brave commander, still thought it was in no immediate danger.

Washington was much perplexed. The main object of Howe was still a matter of doubt with him. He could not think that Sir William was moving his whole force upon that fortress, to invest which a part would be sufficient. He suspected an ulterior object, probably a Southern expedition, as he was told a large number of ships were taking in wood and water at New York. He resolved, therefore, to continue a few days in this neighborhood, during which he trusted the designs of the enemy would be more apparent; in the meantime he would distribute troops at Brunswick, Amboy, Elizabethtown, and Fort Lee, so as to be ready at these various points, to check any incursions into the Jerseys.

In a letter to the President of Congress he urged for an increase of ordnance and field-artillery. The rough, hilly country east of the Hudson, and the strongholds and fastnesses of which the Americans had possessed themselves, had prevented the enemy from profiting by the superiority of their artillery; but this

would not be the case, should the scene of action change to an open campaign country like the Jerseys.

Washington was mistaken in his conjecture as to Sir William Howe's design. The capture of Fort Washington was, at present, his main object; and he was encamped on Fordham Heights, not far from King's Bridge, until preliminary steps should be taken. In the night of the 14th, thirty flat-bottomed boats stole quietly up the Hudson, passed the American forts undiscovered, and made their way through Spyt den Duivel Creek into Harlem River. The means were thus provided for crossing that river and landing before unprotected parts of the American works.

On the 15th, General Howe sent in a summons to surrender, with a threat of extremities should he have to carry the place by assault. Magaw, in his reply, intimated a doubt that General Howe would execute a threat "so unworthy of himself and the British nation; but give me leave," added he, "to assure his Excellency, that, actuated by the most glorious cause that mankind ever fought in, I am determined to defend this post to the very last extremity."

Apprised by the colonel of his peril, General Greene sent over reinforcements, with an ex-

hortation to him to persist in his defense; and despatched an express to Washington, who was at Hackensack, where the troops which had crossed from Peekskill were encamped. It was nightfall when Washington arrived at Fort Lee. Greene and Putnam were over at the besieged fortress. He threw himself into a boat, and had partly crossed the river, when he met those generals returning. They informed him of the garrison's having been reinforced, and assured him that it was in high spirits, and capable of making a good defense. It was with difficulty, however, they could prevail on him to return with them to the Jersey shore, for he was excessively excited.

Early the next morning (16th), Magaw made his dispositions for the expected attack. His forces, with the recent addition, amounted to nearly three thousand men. As the fort could not contain above a third of that number, most of them were stationed about the outworks.

Colonel Lambert Cadwalader, with eight hundred Pennsylvanians, was posted in the outer lines, about two miles and a half south of the fort, the side menaced by Lord Percy with sixteen hundred men. Colonel Rawlings, of Maryland, with a body of troops, many of them riflemen, was stationed by a three-gun

battery, on a rocky, precipitous hill, north of the fort, and between it and Spyt den Duivel Creek. Colonel Baxter, of Bucks County, Pennsylvania, with his regiment of militia, was posted east of the fort, on rough, woody heights, bordering the Harlem River, to watch the motions of the enemy, who had thrown up redoubts on high and commanding ground, on the opposite side of the river, apparently to cover the crossing and landing of troops.

Sir William Howe had planned four simultaneous attacks; one on the north by Knyphausen, who was encamped on the York side of King's Bridge, within cannon shot of Fort Washington, but separated from it by high and rough hills, covered with almost impenetrable woods. He was to advance in two columns, formed by detachments made from the Hessians of his corps, the brigade of Rahl, and the regiment of Waldeckers. The second attack was to be by two battalions of light infantry, and two battalions of guards, under Brigadier-General Mathew, who was to cross Harlem River in flat-boats, under cover of the redoubts above mentioned, and to land on the right of the fort. This attack was to be supported by the first and second grenadiers, and a regiment of light infantry under command of Lord Cornwallis. The third attack, in-

tended as a feint to distract the attention of the Americans, was to be by Colonel Sterling, with the forty-second regiment, who was to drop down the Harlem River in bateaux, to the left of the American lines, facing New York. The fourth attack was to be on the south, by Lord Percy, with the English and Hessian troops under his command, on the right flank of the American intrenchments.*

About noon, a heavy cannonade thundering along the rocky hills, and sharp volleys of musketry, proclaimed that the action was commenced. Knyphausen's division was pushing on from the north in two columns, as had been arranged. The right was led by Colonel Rahl, the left by himself. Rahl essayed to mount a steep, broken height called Cock Hill, which rises from Spyt den Duivel Creek, and was covered with woods. Knyphausen undertook a hill rising from the King's Bridge road, but soon found himself entangled in a woody defile, difficult to penetrate, and where his Hessians were exposed to the fire of the three-gun battery, and Rawlings' riflemen.

While this was going on at the north of the fort, General Mathew, with his light infantry and guards, crossed the Harlem River in the

* Sir William Howe to Lord George Germaine.

flat-boats, under cover of a heavy fire from the redoubts.

He made good his landing, after being severely handled by Baxter and his men, from behind rocks and trees, and the breastworks thrown up on the steep river bank. A short contest ensued. Baxter, while bravely encouraging his men, was killed by a British officer. His troops, overpowered by numbers, retreated to the fort. General Mathew now pushed on with his guards and light infantry to cut off Cadwalader. That officer had gallantly defended the lines against the attack of Lord Percy, until informed that Colonel Sterling was dropping down Harlem River in bateaux to flank the lines, and take him in the rear. He sent off a detachment to oppose his landing. They did it manfully. About ninety of Sterling's men were killed or wounded in their boats, but he persevered, landed, and forced his way up a steep height, which was well defended, gained the summit, forced a redoubt, and took nearly two hundred prisoners. Thus doubly assailed, Cadwalader was obliged to retreat to the fort. He was closely pursued by Percy with his English troops and Hessians, but turned repeatedly on his pursuers. Thus he fought his way to the fort, with the loss of several killed and more taken prisoners; but

marking his track by the number of Hessians slain.

The defense on the north side of the fort was equally obstinate and unsuccessful. Rawlings with his Maryland riflemen and the aid of the three-gun battery, had for some time kept the left column of Hessians and Waldeckers under Knyphausen at bay. At length Colonel Rahl, with the right column of the division, having forced his way directly up the north side of the steep hill at Spyt den Duivel Creek, came upon Rawlings' men, whose rifles from frequent discharges had become foul and almost useless, drove them from their strong post, and followed them until within a hundred yards of the fort, where he was joined by Knyphausen, who had slowly made his way through dense forest and over felled trees. Here they took post behind a large stone house, and sent in a flag, with a second summons to surrender.

Washington, surrounded by several of his officers, had been an anxious spectator of the battle from the opposite side of the Hudson. Much of it was hidden from him by intervening hills and forest; but the roar of cannonry from the valley of Harlem River, the sharp and incessant reports of rifles, and the smoke rising above the tree tops, told him of the spirit with which the assault was received at various

points, and gave him for a time a hope that the defense might be successful. The action about the lines to the south lay open to him, and could be distinctly seen through a telescope; and nothing encouraged him more than the gallant style in which Cadwalader with an inferior force maintained his position. When he saw him, however, assailed in flank, the line broken, and his troops, overpowered by numbers, retreating to the fort, he gave up the game as lost. The worst sight of all, was to behold his men cut down and bayoneted by the Hessians while begging quarter. It is said so completely to have overcome him, that he wept "with the tenderness of a child."

Seeing the flag go into the fort from Knyphausen's division, and surmising it to be a summons to surrender, he wrote a note to Magaw, telling him that if he could hold out until evening and the place could not be maintained, he would endeavor to bring off the garrison in the night. Captain Gooch, of Boston, a brave and daring man, offered to be the bearer of the note. "He ran down to the river, jumped into a small boat, pushed over the river, landed under the bank, ran up to the fort and delivered the message; came out, ran and jumped over the broken ground, dodging the Hessians, some of whom struck at him with

their pieces and others attempted to thrust him with their bayonets; escaping through them, he got to his boat and returned to Fort Lee." *

Washington's message arrived too late. "The fort was so crowded by the garrison, and the troops which had retreated into it, that it was difficult to move about. The enemy, too, were in possession of the little redoubts around, and could have poured in showers of shells and ricochet balls that would have made dreadful slaughter." It was no longer possible for Magaw to get his troops to man the lines; he was compelled, therefore, to yield himself and his garrison prisoners of war. The only terms granted them were, that the men should retain their baggage and the officers their swords.

The sight of the American flag hauled down, and the British flag waving in its place, told Washington of the surrender. His instant care was for the safety of the upper country, now that the lower defenses of the Hudson were at an end. Before he knew anything about the terms of capitulation, he wrote to General Lee, informing him of the surrender, and calling his attention to the passes of the Highlands and those which lay east of the river; begging him to have such measures adopted for their defense as his judgment should

* Heath's *Memoirs*, p. 86.

suggest to be necessary. "I do not mean," added he, "to advise abandoning your present post, contrary to your own opinion; but only to mention my own ideas, of the importance of those passes, and that you cannot give too much attention to their security, by having works erected on the most advantageous places for that purpose."

Lee, in reply, objected to removing from his actual encampment at Northcastle. "It would give us," said he, "the air of being frightened; it would expose a fine, fertile country to their ravages; and I must add, that we are as secure as we could be in any position whatever." After stating that he should deposit his stores, etc., in a place fully as safe, and more central than Peekskill, he adds: As to ourselves, light as we are, several retreats present themselves. In short, if we keep a good look-out, we are in no danger; but I must entreat your Excellency to enjoin the officers posted at Fort Lee, to give us the quickest intelligence, if they observe any embarkation on the North River." As to the affair of Fort Washington, all that Lee observed on the subject was: "O general, why would you be over-persuaded by men of inferior judgment to your own? It was a cursed affair."

Lee's allusion to men of inferior judgment,

was principally aimed at Greene, whose influence with the commander-in-chief seems to have excited a jealousy of other officers of rank. So Colonel Tilghman, Washington's aide-de-camp, writes on the 17th, to Robert R. Livingston of New York, "We were in a fair way of finishing the campaign with credit to ourselves, and, I think, to the disgrace of Mr. Howe; and, had the general followed his own opinion, the garrison would have been withdrawn immediately upon the enemy's falling down from Dobbs Ferry. But General Greene was positive that our forces might at any time be drawn off under the guns of Fort Lee. Fatal experience has evinced the contrary." *

Washington's own comments on the reduction of the fort, made in a letter to his brother Augustine, are worthy of special note. "This is a most unfortunate affair, and has given me great mortification; as we have lost, not only two thousand men, † that were there, but a good deal of artillery, and some of the best arms we had. And what adds to my mortification is, that this post, after the last ships went past it, was held contrary to my wishes and

* *Am. Archives*, 5th Series, iii., 780.

† The number of prisoners, as returned by Sir William Howe, was 2,818, of whom 2,607 were privates. They were marched off to New York at midnight.

opinion, as I conceived it to be a hazardous one: but it having been determined on by a full council of general officers, and a resolution of Congress having been received, strongly expressive of their desire that the channel of the river which we had been laboring to stop for a long time at that place, might be obstructed, if possible; and knowing that this could not be done, unless there were batteries to protect the obstructions, I did not care to give an absolute order for withdrawing the garrison, till I could get round and see the situation of things; and then it became too late, as the place was invested. Upon the passing of the last ships, I had given it as my opinion to General Greene, under whose care it was, that it would be best to evacuate the place; but, as the order was discretionary, and his opinion differed from mine, it was unhappily delayed too long, to my great grief."

The correspondence of Washington with his brother, is full of gloomy anticipations. "In ten days from this date, there will not be above two thousand men, if that number, of the fixed established regiments on this side of Hudson River, to oppose Howe's whole army; and very little more on the other, to secure the eastern colonies, and the important passes leading through the Highlands to Albany, and the

country about the lakes. In short, it is impossible for me, in the compass of a letter, to give you any idea of our situation, of my difficulties, and of the constant perplexities I meet with, derived from the unhappy policy of short enlistments, and delaying them too long. Last fall, or winter, before the army, which was then to be raised, was set about, I represented in clear and explicit terms the evils which would arise from short enlistments, the expense which must attend the raising an army every year, and the futility of such an army when raised; and if I had spoken with a prophetic spirit, I could not have foretold the evils with more accuracy than I did. All the year since, I have been pressing Congress to delay no time in engaging men upon such terms as would insure success, telling them that the longer it was delayed, the more difficult it would prove. But the measure was not commenced until it was too late to be effected. . . . I am wearied almost to death with the retrograde motion of things; and I solemnly protest, that a pecuniary reward of twenty thousand pounds a year would not induce me to undergo what I do, and, after all, perhaps to lose my character; as it is impossible, under such a variety of distressing circumstances, to conduct matters agreeably to public expectations."

Chapter XXVII.

The Enemy Cross the Hudson—Retreat of the Garrison from Fort Lee—The Crossing of the Hackensack—Lee Ordered to Move to the West Side of the River—Reed's Letter to him—Second Move of the Army beyond the Passaic—Assistance Sought from Various Quarters—Correspondences and Schemes of Lee—Heath Stanch to his Instructions—Anxiety of George Clinton for the Safety of the Hudson—Critical Situation of the Army—Disparaging Correspondence between Lee and Reed—Washington Retreats across the Raritan—Arrives at Trenton—Removes his Baggage across the Delaware—Dismay and Despondency of the Country—Proclamation of Lord Howe—Exultation of the Enemy—Washington's Resolve in Case of Extremity.

WITH the capture of Fort Washington, the project of obstructing the navigation of the Hudson, at that point, was at an end. Fort Lee, consequently, became useless, and Washington ordered all the ammunition and stores to be removed, preparatory to its abandonment.

This was effected with the whole of the ammunition, and a part of the stores, and every exertion was making to hurry off the remainder, when early in the morning of the 20th, intelligence was brought that the enemy, with two hundred boats, had crossed the river and landed a few miles above. General Greene immediately ordered the garrison under arms, sent out troops to hold the enemy in check, and sent off an express to Washington at Hackensack.

The enemy had crossed the Hudson on a very rainy night, in two divisions, one diagonally upward from King's Bridge, landing on the west side, about eight o'clock; the other marched up the east bank, three or four miles and then crossed to the opposite shore. The whole corps, six thousand strong, and under the command of Lord Cornwallis, were landed, with their cannon, by ten o'clock, at a place called Closter Dock, five or six miles above Fort Lee, and under that line of lofty and perpendicular cliffs known as the Palisades. "The seamen," says Sir William Howe, "distinguished themselves remarkably on this occasion, by their readiness to drag the cannon up a very narrow road, for nearly half a mile to the top of a precipice, which bounds the shore for some miles on the west side." *

* Some writers have stated that Cornwallis crossed

Washington arrived at the fort in three-quarters of an hour. Being told that the enemy were extending themselves across the country, he at once saw that they intended to form a line from the Hudson to the Hackensack, and hem the whole garrison in between the two rivers. Nothing would save it but a prompt retreat to secure the bridge over the Hackensack. No time was to be lost. The troops sent out to check the enemy were recalled. The retreat commenced in all haste. There was a want of horses and wagons; a great quantity of baggage, stores, and provisions, therefore, was abandoned. So was all the artillery excepting two twelve-pounders. Even the tents were left standing, and camp-kettles on the fire. With all their speed they did not reach the Hackensack River before the vanguard of the enemy was close upon them. Expecting a brush, the greater part hurried over the bridge, others crossed at the ferry, and some higher up. The enemy, however, did not dispute the passage of the river; but Cornwallis stated in his despatches, that, had

on the 18th. They have been misled by a letter of Sir William Howe, which gives that date. Lord Howe, in a letter to the Secretary of the Admiralty, gives the date we have stated (the 20th), which is the true one.

not the Americans been apprised of his approach he would have surrounded them at the fort. Some of his troops that night occupied the tents they had abandoned.

From Hackensack, Colonel Grayson, one of Washington's aides-de-camp, wrote instantly, by his orders, to General Lee; informing him that the enemy had crossed into the Jerseys, and, as was reported, *in great numbers*. "His Excellency," adds Grayson, "thinks it would be advisable in you to remove the troops under your command on this side of the North River, and there wait for further commands."

Washington himself wrote to Lee on the following day (Nov. 21st). "I am of opinion," said he, "and the gentlemen about me concur in it, that the public interest requires your coming over to this side of the Hudson with the continental troops. . . . The enemy is evidently changing the seat of war to this side of the North River, and the inhabitants of this country will expect the continental army to give them what support they can; and failing in that, they will cease to depend upon, or support a force from which no protection is to be derived. It is, therefore, of the utmost importance, that at least an appearance of force should be made, to keep this province in connection with the others."

In this moment of hurry and agitation, Colonel Reed, also, Washington's *fidus Achates*, wrote to Lee, but in a tone and spirit that may surprise the reader, knowing the devotion he had hitherto manifested for the commander-in-chief. After expressing the common wish that Lee should be at the principal scene of action, he adds: "I do not mean to flatter or praise you at the expense of any other; but I do think it is entirely owing to you, that this army, and the liberties of America, so far as they are dependent on it, are not entirely cut off. You have decision, a quality often wanting in minds otherwise valuable, and I ascribe to this our escape from York Island, King's Bridge, and the Plains; and I have no doubt, had you been here, the garrison of Mount Washington would now have composed a part of this army; and from all these circumstances, I confess, I do ardently wish to see you removed from a place where there will be so little call for your judgment and experience, to the place where they are likely to be so necessary. Nor am I singular in my opinion; every gentleman of the family, the officers and soldiers generally, have a confidence in you. The enemy constantly inquire where you are, and seem to be less confident when you are present."

Then alluding to the late affair at Fort Wash-

ington, he continues: "General Washington's own judgment, seconded by representations from us, would, I believe, have saved the men, and their arms; but, unluckily, General Greene's judgment was contrary. This kept the general's mind in a state of suspense, till the stroke was struck. O general! An indecisive mind is one of the greatest misfortunes that can befall an army; how often have I lamented it this campaign. All circumstances considered, we are in a very awful and alarming situation; one that requires the utmost wisdom and firmness of mind. As soon as the season will admit, I think yourself and some others should go to Congress, and form the plan of the new army. . . . I must conclude, with my clear and explicit opinion, that your presence is of the last importance." *

Well might Washington apprehend that his character and conduct, in the perplexities in which he was placed, would be liable to be misunderstood by the public, when the friend of his bosom could so misjudge him.

Reed had evidently been dazzled by the daring spirit and unscrupulous policy of Lee, who, in carrying out his measures, heeded but little the counsels of others, or even the orders of government. Washington's respect for both, and

* *Memoirs of Reed*, i., 255.

the caution with which he hesitated in adopting measures in opposition to them, was stamped by the bold soldier and his admirers as indecision.

At Hackensack the army did not exceed three thousand men, and they were dispirited by ill-success, and the loss of tents and baggage. They were without intrenching tools, in a flat country, where there were no natural fastnesses. Washington resolved, therefore, to avoid any attack from the enemy, though, by so doing, he must leave a fine and fertile region open to their ravages; or a plentiful storehouse, from which they would draw voluntary supplies. A second move was necessary, again to avoid the danger of being inclosed between two rivers. Leaving three regiments, therefore, to guard the passes of the Hackensack, and serve as covering parties, he again decamped, and threw himself on the west bank of the Passaic, in the neighborhood of Newark.

His army, small as it was, would soon be less. The term of enlistment of those under General Mercer, from the flying camp, was nearly expired; and it was not probable that, disheartened as they were by defeats and losses, exposed to inclement weather, and unaccustomed to military hardships, they would longer forego the comforts of their homes, to drag out the residue of a ruinous campaign.

The Hackensack River near Little Ferry.

Reversed from an old French print.

I conceive to be the spirit of the orders, than should I move the corps from hence. Withdrawing our troops from hence would be attended with some very serious consequences, which at present would be tedious to enumerate; as to myself," adds he, "I hope to set out tomorrow."

A letter of the same date (Nov. 23d), from Lee to James Bowdoin, president of the Massachusetts council, may throw some light on his motives for delaying to obey the orders of the commander-in-chief. "Before the unfortunate affair at Fort Washington," writes he, "it was my opinion that the two armies—that on the east, and that on the west side of the North River—must rest each on its own bottom; that the idea of detaching and reinforcing from one side to the other, on every motion of the enemy, was chimerical; but to harbor such a thought in our present circumstances, is absolute insanity. In this invasion, should the enemy alter the present direction of their operations, and attempt to open the passage of the Highlands, or enter New England, I should never entertain the thought of being succoured by the western army. I know it is impossible. We must, therefore, depend upon ourselves. To Connecticut and Massachusetts, I shall look for assistance. . . . I hope the cursed job

of Fort Washington will occasion no dejection: the place itself was of no value. For my own part, I am persuaded that if we only act with common sense, spirit, and decision, the day must be our own."

In another letter to Bowdoin, dated on the following day, and inclosing an extract from Washington's letter of Nov. 21st, he writes: "Indecision bids fair for tumbling down the goodly fabric of American freedom, and, with it, the rights of mankind. 'T was indecision of Congress prevented our having a noble army, and on an excellent footing. 'T was indecision in our military councils which cost us the garrison of Fort Washington, the consequence of which must be fatal, unless remedied in time by a contrary spirit. Inclosed I send you an extract of a letter from the general, on which you will make your comments; and I have no doubt you will concur with me in the necessity of raising immediately an army to save us from perdition. Affairs appear in so important a crisis, that I think the resolves of the Congress must no longer too nicely weigh with us. We must save the community, in spite of the ordinances of the Legislature. There are times when we must commit treason against the laws of the State, for the salvation of the State. The present crisis demands this brave,

virtuous kind of treason." He urges President Bowdoin, therefore, to waive all formalities, and not only complete the regiments prescribed to the province, but to add four companies to each regiment. "We must not only have a force sufficient to cover your province, and all these fertile districts, from the insults and irruptions of the tyrant's troops, but sufficient to drive 'em out of all their quarters in the Jerseys, or all is lost. . . . In the meantime, send up a formidable body of militia, to supply the place of the continental troops, which I am ordered to convey over the river. Let your people be well supplied with blankets, and warm clothes, as I am determined, by the help of God, to unnest 'em, even in the dead of winter." *

It is evident Lee considered Washington's star to be on the decline, and his own in the ascendant. The "affair of Fort Washington," and the "indecision of the commander-in-chief," were apparently his watchwords.

On the following day (24th), he writes to Washington from Northcastle, on the subject of removing troops across the Hudson. "I have received your orders, and shall endeavor to put them in execution, but question whether I shall be able to carry with me any consider-

* *Am. Archives*, 5th Series, iii., 811.

able number; not so much from a want of zeal in the men, as from their wretched condition with respect to shoes, stockings, and blankets, which the present bad weather renders more intolerable. I sent Heath orders to transport two thousand men across the river, apprise the general, and wait for further orders; but that great man (as I might have expected) intrenched himself within the letter of his instructions, and refused to part with a single file, though I undertook to replace them with a part of my own." He concludes by showing that, so far from hurrying to the support of his commander-in-chief, he was meditating a side blow of his own devising. "I should march this day with Glover's brigade; but have just received intelligence that Rogers' corps, a part of the light horse, and another brigade lie in so exposed a situation, as to present us the fairest opportunity of carrying them off. If we succeed, it will have a great effect, and amply compensate for two days' delay."

Scarce had Lee sent this letter, when he received one from Washington, informing him that he had mistaken his views in regard to the troops required to cross the Hudson; it was his (Lee's) division that he wanted to have over. The force under Heath must remain to guard the posts and passes through the High-

lands, the importance of which was so infinitely great, that there should not be the least possible risk of losing them. In the same letter Washington, who presumed Lee was by this time at Peekskill, advised him to take every precaution to come by a safe route, and by all means to keep between the enemy and the mountains, as he understood they were taking measures to intercept his march.

Lee's reply was still from Northcastle. He explained that his idea of detaching troops from Heath's division was merely for expedition's sake, intending to replace them from his own. The want of carriages and other causes had delayed him. From the force of the enemy remaining in Westchester County, he did not conceive the number of them in the Jerseys to be near so great as Washington was taught to believe. He had been making a sweep of the country to clear it of the tories. Part of his army had now moved on, and he would set out on the following day. He concluded with the assurance, "I shall take care to obey your Excellency's orders, in regard to my march, as exactly as possible."

On the same day, he vents his spleen in a tart letter to Heath. "I perceive," writes he, "that you have formed an idea, that should General Washington remove to the Straits of

Magellan, the instructions he left with you, upon a particular occasion, have, to all intents and purposes, invested you with a command separate from, and independent of, any other superiors. . . . That General Heath is by no means to consider himself obliged to obey the second in command." He concluded by informing him that, as the commander-in-chief was now separated from them, he (Lee) commanded, of course, on this side of the water, and for the future would and must be obeyed.

Before receiving this letter, Heath, doubtful whether Washington might not be pressed, and desirous of having his troops across the Hudson, had sent off an express to him for explicit instructions on that point, and, in the meantime, had kept them ready for a move.

General George Clinton, who was with him, and had the safety of the Hudson at heart, was in an agony of solicitude. "We have been under marching orders these three days past," writes he, "and only wait the directions of General Washington. Should they be to move, all 's over with the river this season, and, I fear, forever. General Lee, four or five days ago, had orders to move with his division across the river. Instead of so doing, he ordered General Heath to march his men through,

and he would replace them with so many of his. General Heath could not do this consistent with his instructions, but put his men under marching orders to wait his Excellency's orders." Honest George Clinton was still perplexed and annoyed by these marchings and countermarchings; and especially with these incessant retreats. "A strange way of cooking business!" writes he. "We have no particular accounts yet from headquarters, *but I am apt to believe retreating is yet fashionable.*"

The return of the express sent to Washington relieved Clinton's anxiety about the Highlands; reiterating the original order, that the division under Heath should remain for the protection of the passes.

Washington was still at Newark when, on the 27th, he received Lee's letter of the 24th, speaking of his scheme of capturing Rogers the partisan. Under other circumstances it might have been a sufficient excuse for his delay, but higher interests were at stake; he immediately wrote to Lee as follows: "My former letters were so full and explicit, as to the necessity of your marching as early as possible, that it is unnecessary to add more on that head. I confess I expected you would have been sooner in motion. The force here,

when joined by yours, will not be adequate to any great opposition; at present it is weak, and it has been more owing to the badness of the weather that the enemy's progress has been checked, than any resistance we could make. They are now pushing this way—part of 'em have passed the Passaic. Their plan is not entirely unfolded, but I shall not be surprised if Philadelphia should turn out the object of their movement."

The situation of the little army was daily becoming more perilous. In a council of war, several of the members urged a move to Morristown, to form a junction with the troops expected from the Northern army. Washington, however, still cherished the idea of making a stand at Brunswick on the Raritan, or, at all events, of disputing the passage of the Delaware; and in this intrepid resolution he was warmly seconded by Greene.

Breaking up his camp once more, therefore, he continued his retreat towards New Brunswick; but so close was Cornwallis upon him, that his advance entered one end of Newark, just as the American rear-guard had left the other.

From Brunswick, Washington wrote on the 29th to William Livingston, governor of the Jerseys, requesting him to have all boats and

river craft, for seventy miles along the Delaware, removed to the western bank out of the reach of the enemy, and put under guard. He was disappointed in his hope of making a stand on the banks of the Raritan. All the force he could muster at Brunswick, including the New Jersey militia, did not exceed four thousand men. Colonel Reed had failed in procuring aid from the New Jersey legislature. That body, shifting from place to place, was on the eve of dissolution. The term of the Maryland and New Jersey troops in the flying camp had expired. General Mercer endeavored to detain them, representing the disgrace of turning their back upon the cause when the enemy was at hand: his remonstrances were fruitless. As to the Pennsylvania levies, they deserted in such numbers, that guards were stationed on the roads and ferries to intercept them.

At this moment of care and perplexity, a letter, forwarded by express, arrived at headquarters. It was from General Lee, dated from his camp at Northcastle, to Colonel Reed, and was in reply to the letter written by that officer from Hackensack on the 21st, which we have already laid before the reader. Supposing that it related to official business, Washington opened it, and read as follows:

"My dear Reed,—I received your most obliging, flattering letter; lament with you that fatal indecision of mind, which in war is a much greater disqualification than stupidity, or even want of personal courage. Accident may put a decisive blunderer in the right; but eternal defeat and miscarriage must attend the man of the best parts, if cursed with indecision. The general recommends in so pressing a manner as almost to amount to an order; to bring over the continental troops under my command, which recommendation, or order, throws me into the greatest dilemma from several considerations." After stating these considerations, he adds: "My reason for not having marched already is, that we have just received intelligence that Rogers' corps, the light horse, part of the Highlanders, and another brigade, lie in so exposed a situation as to give the fairest opportunity of being carried. I should have attempted it last night, but the rain was too violent, and when our pieces are wet, you know our troops are *hors de combat.* This night I hope will be better. . . . I only wait myself for this business of Rogers and company being over. I shall then fly to you; for, to confess a truth, I really think our chief will do better with me than without me."

A glance over this letter sufficed to show Washington that, at this dark moment, when he most needed support and sympathy, his character and military conduct were the subject of disparaging comments, between the friend in whom he had so implicitly confided, and a sarcastic and apparently self-constituted rival. Whatever may have been his feelings of wounded pride and outraged friendship, he restrained them, and inclosed the letter to Reed, with the following chilling note:

"DEAR SIR,—The inclosed was put into my hands by an express from White Plains. Having no idea of its being a private letter, much less suspecting the tendency of the correspondence, I opened it; as I have done all other letters to you from the same place, and Peekskill, upon the business of your office, as I conceived, and found them to be. This, as it is the truth, must be my excuse for seeing the contents of a letter, which neither inclination nor intention would have prompted me to," etc.

The very calmness and coldness of this note must have had a greater effect upon Reed, than could have been produced by the most vehement reproaches. In subsequent communications, he endeavored to explain away the

offensive paragraphs in Lee's letter, declaring there was nothing in his own inconsistent with the respect and affection he had ever borne for Washington's person and character.

Fortunately for Reed, Washington never saw that letter. There were passages in it beyond the reach of softening explanation. As it was, the purport of it, as reflected in Lee's reply, had given him a sufficient shock. His magnanimous nature, however, was incapable of harboring long resentments; especially in matters relating solely to himself. His personal respect for Colonel Reed continued; he invariably manifested a high sense of his merits, and consulted him, as before, on military affairs; but his hitherto affectionate confidence in him, as a sympathizing friend, had received an incurable wound. His letters, before so frequent, and such perfect outpourings of heart and mind, became few and far between, and confined to matters of business.

It must have been consoling to Washington at this moment of bitterness, to receive the following letter (dated Nov. 27th) from William Livingston, the intelligent and patriotic governor of New Jersey. It showed that while many misjudged him, and friends seemed falling from his side, others appreciated him truly, and the ordeal he was undergoing.

"I can easily form some idea of the difficulties under which you labor," writes Livingston, "particularly of one for which the public can make no allowance, because your prudence and fidelity to the cause will not suffer you to reveal it to the public; an instance of magnanimity, superior, perhaps, to any that can be shown in battle. But depend upon it, my dear sir, the impartial world will do you ample justice before long. May God support you under the fatigue, both of body and mind, to which you must be constantly exposed." *

Washington lingered at Brunswick until the 1st of December, in the vain hope of being reinforced. The enemy, in the meantime, advanced through the country, impressing wagons and horses, and collecting cattle and sheep, as

* We cannot dismiss this painful incident in Washington's life, without a prospective note on the subject. Reed was really of too generous and intelligent a nature not to be aware of the immense value of the friendship he had put at hazard. He grieved over his mistake, especially as after events showed more and more the majestic greatness of Washington's character. A letter in the following year, in which he sought to convince Washington of his sincere and devoted attachment, is really touching in its appeals. We are happy to add, that it appears to have been successful, and to have restored, in a great measure, their relations of friendly confidence.

if for a distant march. At length their vanguard appeared on the opposite side of the Raritan. Washington immediately broke down the end of the bridge next the village, and after nightfall resumed his retreat. In the meantime, as the river was fordable, Captain Alexander Hamilton planted his field-pieces on high, commanding ground, and opened a spirited fire, to check any attempt of the enemy to cross.

At Princeton, Washington left twelve hundred men in two brigades, under Lord Stirling and General Adam Stephen, to cover the country, and watch the motions of the enemy. Stephen was the same officer that had served as a colonel under Washington in the French war, as second in command of the Virginia troops, and had charge of Fort Cumberland. In consideration of his courage and military capacity, he had, in 1764, been intrusted with the protection of the frontier. He had recently brought a detachment of Virginia troops to the army, and received from Congress, in September, the commission of brigadier-general.

The harassed army reached Trenton on the 2d of December. Washington immediately proceeded to remove his baggage and stores across the Delaware. In his letters from this place to the President of Congress, he gives

his reasons for his continued retreat. "Nothing but necessity obliged me to retire before the enemy, and leave so much of the Jerseys unprotected. Sorry am I to observe that the frequent calls upon the militia of this State, the want of exertion in the principal gentlemen of the country, and a fatal supineness and insensibility of danger, till it is too late to prevent an evil that was not only foreseen, but foretold, have been the causes of our late disgraces.

"If the militia of this State had stepped forth in season (and timely notice they had), we might have prevented the enemy's crossing the Hackensack. We might, with equal possibility of success, have made a stand at Brunswick on the Raritan. But as both these rivers were fordable in a variety of places, being knee deep only, it required many men to guard the passes, and these we had not."

In excuse for the people of New Jersey, it may be observed, that they inhabited an open, agricultural country, where the sound of war had never been heard. Many of them looked upon the Revolution as rebellion; others thought it a ruined enterprise; the armies engaged in it had been defeated and broken up. They beheld the commander-in-chief retreating through their country with a handful of men, weary, wayworn, dispirited; without tents,

without clothing, many of them barefooted, exposed to wintry weather, and driven from post to post, by a well-clad, well-fed, triumphant force, tricked out in all the glittering bravery of war. Could it be wondered at, that peaceful husbandmen, seeing their quiet fields thus suddenly overrun by adverse hosts, and their very hearthstones threatened with outrage, should, instead of flying to arms, seek for the safety of their wives and little ones, and the protection of their humble means, from the desolation which too often marks the course even of friendly armies?

Lord Howe and his brother sought to profit by this dismay and despondency. A proclamation, dated 30th of November, commanded all persons in arms against His Majesty's government to disband and return home, and all Congresses to desist from treasonable acts: offering a free pardon to all who should comply within fifty days.

Many who had been prominent in the cause, hastened to take advantage of this proclamation. Those who had most property to lose, were the first to submit. The middle ranks remained generally steadfast in this time of trial.*

The following extract of a letter from a field-

* Gordon's *Hist. Am. War*, ii., p. 129.

officer in New York, dated December 2d, to his friend in London, gives the British view of affairs. "The rebels continue flying before our army. Lord Cornwallis took the fort opposite Brunswick, plunged into Raritan River, and seized the town. Mr. Washington had orders from the Congress to rally and defend that post, but he sent them word he could not. He was seen retreating with two brigades to Trenton, where they talk of resisting; but such a panic has seized the rebels, that no part of the Jerseys will hold them, and I doubt whether Philadelphia itself will stop their career. The Congress have lost their authority. . . . They are in such consternation that they know not what to do. The two Adamses are in New England; Franklin gone to France; Lynch has lost his senses; Rutledge has gone home disgusted; Dana is persecuting at Albany, and Jay 's in the country playing as bad a part; so that the fools have lost the assistance of the knaves. However, should they embrace the inclosed proclamation, they may yet escape the halter. . . . Honest David Matthew, the mayor, has made his escape from them, and arrived here this day." *

In this dark day of peril to the cause and to himself, Washington remained firm and un-

* *Am. Archives*, 5th Series, iii., 1037.

daunted. In casting about for some stronghold where he might make a desperate stand for the liberties of his country, his thoughts reverted to the mountain regions of his early campaigns. General Mercer was at hand, who had shared his perils among these mountains, and his presence may have contributed to bring them to his mind. "What think you," said Washington; "if we should retreat to the back parts of Pennsylvania, would the Pennsylvanians support us?"

"If the lower counties give up, the back counties will do the same," was the discouraging reply.

"We must then retire to Augusta County in Virginia," said Washington. "Numbers will repair to us for safety, and we will try a predatory war. If overpowered, we must cross the Alleghanies."

Such was the indomitable spirit, rising under difficulties, and buoyant in the darkest moment, that kept our tempest-tossed cause from foundering.

Chapter XXVII.

Lee at Peekskill—Stanch Adherence of Heath to Orders—Lee Crosses the Hudson—Washington at Trenton—Lee at the Heels of the Enemy—His Speculations on Military Greatness—Forced March of Cornwallis—Washington Crosses the Delaware—Putnam in Command at Philadelphia—Baffling Letters of Lee—Hopes to Reconquer the Jerseys—Gates on the March—Lee Quartered at Basking-ridge—Surprised and Captured—Speculations on his Conduct.

NOTWITHSTANDING the repeated and pressing orders and entreaties of the commander-in-chief, Lee did not reach Peekskill until the 30th of November. In a letter of that date to Washington, who had complained of his delay, he simply alleged difficulties, which he would explain *when both had leisure*. His scheme to entrap Rogers, the renegade, had failed; the old Indian hunter had been too much on the alert; he boasted, however, to have rendered more service by his

delay, than he would have done had he moved sooner. His forces were thereby augmented, so that he expected to enter the Jerseys with four thousand firm and willing men, who would make *a very important diversion.*

"The day after to-morrow," added he, "we shall pass the river, when I should be glad to receive your instructions; but I could wish you would bind me as little as possible; not from any opinion, I do assure you, of my own parts, but from a persuasion that detached generals cannot have too great latitude, unless they are very incompetent indeed."

Lee had calculated upon meeting no further difficulty in obtaining men from Heath. He rode to that general's quarters in the evening, and was invited by him to alight and take tea. On entering the house, Lee took Heath aside, and alluding to his former refusal to supply troops as being inconsistent with the orders of the commander-in-chief. "In point of *law*," said he, "you are right, but in point of policy I think you are wrong. I am going into the Jerseys for the salvation of America; I wish to take with me a larger force than I now have, and request you to order two thousand of your men to march with me."

Heath answered that he could not spare that number. He was then asked to order one

thousand; to which he replied, that the business might be as well brought to a point at once—that not a single man should march from the post by *his* order. "Then," exclaimed Lee, "I will order them myself." "That makes a wide difference," rejoined Heath. "You are my senior, but I have received positive written instructions from him who is superior to us both, and I will not *myself* break those orders." In proof of his words, Heath produced the recent letter received from Washington, repeating his former orders that no troops should be removed from that post. Lee glanced over the letter. "The commander-in-chief is now at a distance, and does not know what is necessary here so well as I do." He asked a sight of the return book of the division. It was brought by Major Huntington, the deputy adjutant-general. Lee ran his eye over it, and chose two regiments. "You will order them to march early to-morrow morning to join me," said he to the major. Heath ruffling with the pride of military law, turned to the major with an air of authority. "Issue such orders at your peril!" exclaimed he: then addressing Lee, "Sir," said he, "if you come to this post, and mean to issue orders here which will break the positive ones I have received, I pray you to do it completely your-

self, and through your own deputy adjutant-general who is present, and not draw me or any of my family in as partners in the guilt."

"It is right," said Lee; "Colonel Scammel, do you issue the order." It was done accordingly; but Heath's punctilious scruples were not yet satisfied. "I have one more request to make, sir," said he to Lee, "and that is, that you will be pleased to give me a certificate that you *exercise command* at this post, and order from it these regiments."

Lee hesitated to comply, but George Clinton, who was present, told him he could not refuse a request so reasonable. He accordingly wrote, "For the satisfaction of General Heath, and at his request, I do certify that I am commanding officer, at this present writing, in this post, and that I have, in that capacity, ordered Prescott's and Wyllis' regiments to march."

Heath's military punctilio was satisfied, and he smoothed his ruffled plumes. Early the next morning the regiments moved from their cantonments ready to embark, when Lee again rode up to his door. "Upon further consideration," said he, "I have concluded not to take the two regiments with me—you may order them to return to their former post."

"This conduct of General Lee," adds Heath in his memoirs, "appeared not a little extra-

ordinary, and one is almost at a loss to account for it. He had been a soldier from his youth, had a perfect knowledge of service in all its branches, but was rather obstinate in his temper, and could scarcely brook being crossed in anything in the line of his profession." *

It was not until the 4th of December that Lee crossed the Hudson and began a laggard march, though aware of the imminent peril of Washington, and his army—how different from the celerity of his movements in his expedition to the South !

In the meantime, Washington, who was at Trenton, had profited by a delay of the enemy at Brunswick, and removed most of the stores and baggage of the army across the Delaware ; and being reinforced by fifteen hundred of the Pennsylvania militia, procured by Mifflin, prepared to face about, and march back to Princeton with such of his troops as were fit for service, there to be governed by circumstances, and the movements of General Lee. Accordingly, on the 5th of December he sent about twelve hundred men in the advance, to reinforce Lord Stirling, and the next day set off himself with the residue.

"The general has gone forward to Prince-

* The above scene is given almost literally from General Heath's *Memoirs*.

ton," writes Colonel Reed, "where there are about three thousand men, with which, I fear, he will not be able to make any stand." *

While on the march, Washington received a letter from Greene, who was at Princeton, informing him of a report that Lee was "at the heels of the enemy." "I should think," adds Greene, "he had better keep on the flanks than the rear, unless it were possible to concert an attack at the same instant of time in front and rear. . . . I think General Lee must be confined within the lines of some general plan, or else his operations will be independent of yours. His own troops, General St. Clair's, and the militia, must form a respectable army."

Lee had no idea of conforming to a general plan; he had an independent plan of his own, and was at that moment at Pompton, indulging speculations on military greatness, and the lamentable want of it in his American contemporaries. In a letter from that place to Governor Cooke of Rhode Island, he imparts his notions on the subject. "Theory joined to practice, or a heaven-born genius, can alone constitute a general. As to the latter, God Almighty indulges the world very rarely with the spectacle; and I do not know, from what I have seen, that he has been more profuse of

* Reed to the President of Congress.

this ethereal spirit to the Americans, than to other nations."

While Lee was thus loitering and speculating, Cornwallis, knowing how far he was in the rear, and how weak was the situation of Washington's army, and being himself strongly reinforced, made a forced march from Brunswick and was within two miles of Princeton. Stirling, to avoid being surrounded, immediately set out with two brigades for Trenton. Washington, too, receiving intelligence by express of these movements, hastened back to that place, and caused boats to be collected from all quarters, and the stores and troops transported across the Delaware. He himself crossed with the rear-guard on Sunday morning, and took up his quarters about a mile from the river; causing the boats to be destroyed, and troops to be posted opposite the fords. He was conscious, however, as he said, that with his small force he could make no great opposition, should the enemy bring boats with them. Fortunately, they did not come thus provided.

The rear-guard, says an American account, had barely crossed the river, when Lord Cornwallis "came marching down with all the pomp of war, in great expectation of getting boats, and immediately pursuing." Not one

was to be had there or elsewhere; for Washington had caused the boats, for an extent of seventy miles up and down the river, to be secured on the right bank. His lordship was effectually brought to a stand. He made some moves with two columns, as if he would cross the Delaware above and below, either to push on to Philadelphia, or to entrap Washington in the acute angle made by the bend of the river opposite Bordentown. An able disposition of American troops along the upper part of the river, and of a number of galleys below, discouraged any attempt of the kind. Cornwallis, therefore, gave up the pursuit, distributed the German troops in cantonments along the left bank of the river, and stationed his main force at Brunswick, trusting to be able before long to cross the Delaware on the ice.

On the 8th, Washington wrote to the President of Congress: "There is not a moment's time to be lost in assembling such a force as can be collected, as the object of the enemy cannot now be doubted in the smallest degree. Indeed, I shall be out in my conjecture, for it is only conjecture, if the late embarkation at New York is not for Delaware River, to cooperate with the army under General Howe, who, I am informed from good authority, is with the British troops, and his whole force

upon this route. I have no certain intelligence of General Lee, although I have sent expresses to him, and lately a Colonel Humpton, to bring me some accurate accounts of his situation. I last night despatched another gentleman to him (Major Hoops), desiring he would hasten his march to the Delaware, on which I would provide boats near a place called Alexandria, for the transportation of his troops. I cannot account for the slowness of his march."

In further letters to Lee, Washington urged the peril of Philadelphia. "Do come on," writes he; "your arrival may be fortunate, and, if it can be effected without delay, it may be the means of preserving a city, whose loss must prove of the most fatal consequence to the cause of America."

Putnam was now detached to take command of Philadelphia, and put it in a state of defense, and General Mifflin to have charge of the munitions of war deposited there. By their advice Congress hastily adjourned on the 12th of December, to meet again on the 20th, at Baltimore.

Washington's whole force at this time, was about five thousand five hundred men; one thousand of them Jersey militia, fifteen hundred militia from Philadelphia, and a battalion

of five hundred of the German yeomanry of Pennsylvania. Gates, however, he was informed, was coming on with seven regiments detached by Schuyler from the Northern department; reinforced by these, and the troops under Lee, he hoped to be able to attempt a stroke upon the enemy's forces, which lay a good deal scattered, and, to all appearances, in a state of security. "A lucky blow in this quarter," writes he, "would be fatal to them, and would most certainly raise the spirits of the people, which are quite sunk by our late misfortunes." *

While cheering himself with these hopes, and trusting to speedy aid from Lee, that wayward commander, though nearly three weeks had elapsed since he had received Washington's orders and entreaties to join him with all possible despatch, was no farther on his march than Morristown, in the Jerseys; where, with militia recruits, his force was about four thousand men. In a letter written by him on the 8th of December to a committee of Congress, he says: "If I was not taught to think the army with General Washington had been considerably reinforced, I should immediately join him; but as I am assured he is very strong, I should imagine we can make a better

* Washington to Gov. Trumbull, 14th Dec.

impression by beating up and harassing their detached parties in their rear, for which purpose a good post at Chatham seems the best calculated. It is a happy distance from Newark, Elizabethtown, Woodbridge, and Boundbrook. We shall, I expect, annoy, distract, and consequently weaken them in a desultory war." *

On the same day he writes from Chatham, in reply to Washington's letter by Major Hoops, just received: "I am extremely shocked to hear that your force is so inadequate to the necessity of your situation, as I had been taught to think you had been considerably reinforced. Your last letters proposing a plan of surprises and forced marches, convinced me that there was no danger of your being obliged to pass the Delaware; in consequence of which proposals, I have put myself in a position the most convenient to co-operate with you by attacking their rear. I cannot persuade myself that Philadelphia is their object at present. . . . It will be difficult, I am afraid, to join you; but cannot I do you more service by attacking their rear?"

This letter sent by a light-horseman, received an instant reply from Washington. "Philadelphia, beyond all question, is the object of

* *Am. Archives*, 5th Series, iii., 1121.

the enemy's movements, and nothing less than our utmost exertions will prevent General Howe from possessing it. The force I have is weak, and utterly incompetent to that end. I must, therefore, entreat you to push on with every possible succor you can bring." *

On the 9th, Lee, who was at Chatham, received information from Heath, that three of the regiments detached under Gates from the Northern army, had arrived from Albany at Peekskill. He instantly writes to him to forward them, without loss of time, to Morristown: "I am in hopes," adds he, "to reconquer (if I may so express myself) the Jerseys. It was really in the hands of the enemy before my arrival."

On the 11th, Lee writes to Washington from Morristown, where he says his troops had been obliged to halt two days for want of shoes. He now talked of crossing the great Brunswick post-road, and, by a forced night's march, making his way to the ferry above Burlington, where boats should be sent up from Philadelphia to receive him.

"I am much surprised," writes Washington in reply, "that you should be in any doubt respecting the route you should take, after the information you have received upon that head.

*Am. Archives, 5th Series, iii., 1138.

A large number of boats was procured, and is still retained at Tinicum, under a strong guard, to facilitate your passage across the Delaware. I have so frequently mentioned our situation, and the necessity of your aid, that it is painful for me to add a word on the subject. . . . Congress have directed Philadelphia to be defended to the last extremity. The fatal consequences that must attend its loss, are but too obvious to every one; your arrival may be the means of saving it."

In detailing the close of General Lee's march, so extraordinary for its tardiness, we shall avail ourselves of the memoir already cited, of General Wilkinson, who was at that time a brigade major, about twenty-two years of age, and was accompanying General Gates, who had been detached by Schuyler with seven regiments to reinforce Washington. Three of these regiments, as we have shown, had descended the Hudson to Peekskill, and were ordered by Lee to Morristown. Gates had embarked with the remaining four, and landed with them at Esopus, whence he took a back route by the Delaware and the Minisink.

On the 11th of December, he was detained by a heavy snowstorm, in a sequestered valley near the Wallpeck in New Jersey. Being cut off from all information respecting the adverse

armies, he detatched Major Wilkinson to seek Washington's camp, with a letter, stating the force under his command, and inquiring what route he should take. Wilkinson crossed the hills on horseback to Sussex court-house, took a guide, and proceeded down the country. Washington, he soon learnt, had passed the Delaware several days before; the boats, he was told, had been removed from the ferries, so that he would find some difficulty in getting over, but Major-General Lee was at Morristown. Finding such obstacles in his way to the commander-in-chief, he determined to seek the second in command, and ask orders from him for General Gates. Lee had decamped from Morristown on the 12th of December, but had marched no farther than Vealtown, barely eight miles distant. There he left General Sullivan with the troops, while he took up his quarters three miles off, at a tavern, at Baskingridge. As there was not a British cantonment within twenty miles, he took but a small guard for his protection, thinking himself perfectly secure.

About four o'clock in the morning, Wilkinson arrived at his quarters. He was presented to the general as he lay in bed, and delivered into his hands the letter of General Gates. Lee, observing it was addressed to Washing-

ton, declined opening it, until apprised by Wilkinson of its contents, and the motives of his visit. He then broke the seal, and recommended Wilkinson to take repose. The latter lay down on his blanket, before a comfortable fire, among the officers of his suite; "for we were not encumbered in those days," says he, with beds or baggage."

Lee, naturally indolent, lingered in bed until eight o'clock. He then came down in his usual slovenly style, half-dressed, in slippers and blanket coat, his collar open, and his linen apparently of some days' wear. After some inquiries about the campaign in the North, he gave Wilkinson a brief account of the operations of the main army, which he condemned in strong terms, and in his usual sarcastic way. He wasted the morning in altercation with some of the militia, particularly the Connecticut light horse: "several of whom," says Wilkinson, "appeared in large, full-bottomed perukes, and were treated very irreverently. One wanted forage, another his horse shod, another his pay, a fourth provisions, etc.; to which the general replied: 'Your wants are numerous; but you have not mentioned the last,—you want to go home, and shall be indulged; for d—— you, you do no good here.'"

Colonel Scammel, the adjutant-general, called

from General Sullivan for orders concerning the morning march. After musing a moment or two, Lee asked him if he had a manuscript map of the country. It was produced, and spread upon a table. Wilkinson observed Lee trace with his finger the route from Vealtown to Pluckamin, thence to Somerset court-house, and on, by Rocky Hill, to Princeton; he then returned to Pluckamin, and traced the route in the same manner by Boundbrook to Brunswick, and after a close inspection carelessly said to Scammel: "Tell General Sullivan to move down towards Pluckamin; that I will soon be with him."

This, observes Wilkinson, was off his route to Alexandria on the Delaware, where he had been ordered to cross, and directly on that towards Brunswick and Princeton. He was convinced, therefore, that Lee meditated an attack on the British post at the latter place.

From these various delays they did not sit down to breakfast before ten o'clock. After breakfast Lee sat writing a reply to General Gates, in which, as usual, he indulged in sarcastic comments on the commander-in-chief. "The ingenious manœuvre of Fort Washington," writes he, "has completely unhinged the goodly fabric we had been building. There never was so d—d a stroke; *entre' nous*, a

certain great man is most damnably deficient. He has thrown me into a situation where I have my choice of difficulties: if I stay in this province I risk myself and army, and if I do not stay, the province is lost forever. . . . As to what relates to yourself, if you think you can be in time to aid the general, I would have you by all means go; you will at least save your army," etc.*

While Lee was writing, Wilkinson was looking out of a window down a lane, about a hundred yards in length, leading from the house to the main road. Suddenly a party of British dragoons turned a corner of the avenue at full charge. "Here, sir, are the British cavalry!" exclaimed Wilkinson.

"Where?" replied Lee, who had just signed his letter.

"Around the house!"—for they had opened file and surrounded it.

"Where is the guard? d—— the guard, why don't they fire?" Then after a momentary pause—"Do, sir, see what has become of the guard."

The guards, alas, unwary as their general, and chilled by the air of a frosty morning, had stacked their arms, and repaired to the south side of a house on the opposite side of the road

* *Am. Archives*, 5th Series, iii., 1201.

to sun themselves, and were now chased by the dragoons in different directions. In fact, a tory, who had visited the general the evening before, to complain of the loss of a horse taken by the army, having found where Lee was to lodge and breakfast, had ridden eighteen miles in the night, to Brunswick, and given the information, and had piloted back Colonel Harcourt with his dragoons.*

The women of the house would fain have concealed Lee in a bed, but he rejected the proposition with disdain. Wilkinson, according to his own account, posted himself in a place where only one person could approach at a time, and there took his stand, a pistol in each hand, resolved to shoot the first and second assailant, and then appeal to his sword. While in this "unpleasant situation," as he terms it, he heard a voice declare, "If the general does not surrender in five minutes, I will set fire to the house!" After a short pause the threat was repeated, with a solemn oath. Within two minutes he heard it proclaimed: "Here is the general; he has surrendered."

There was a shout of triumph, but a great hurry to make sure of the prize before the

* Joseph Trumbull to Governor Trumbull. *Am. Archives*, 5th Series, iii., 1265.

army should arrive to the rescue. A trumpet sounded the recall to the dragoons, who were chasing the scattered guards. The general, bareheaded, and in his slippers and blanket coat, was mounted on Wilkinson's horse, which stood at the door, and the troop clattered off with their prisoner to Brunswick. In three hours the booming of the cannon in that direction told the exultation of the enemy.* They boasted of having taken the American Palladium; for they considered Lee the most scientific and experienced of the rebel generals.

On the departure of the troops, Wilkinson, finding the coast clear, ventured from his stronghold, repaired to the stable, mounted the first horse he could find, and rode full speed in quest of General Sullivan, whom he found under march toward Pluckamin. He handed him the letter to Gates, written by Lee the moment before his capture, and still open. Sullivan having read it, returned it to Wilkinson, and advised him to rejoin General Gates without delay: for his own part, being now in command, he changed his route, and pressed forward to join the commander-in-chief.

The loss of Lee was a severe shock to the Americans; many of whom, as we have shown,

* *Ibid.*

looked to him as the man who was to rescue them from their critical and well-nigh desperate situation. With their regrets, however, were mingled painful doubts, caused by his delay in obeying the repeated summons of his commander-in-chief, when the latter was in peril; and by his exposing himself so unguardedly in the very neighborhood of the enemy. Some at first suspected that he had done so designedly, and with collusion; but this was soon disapproved by the indignities attending his capture, and his rigorous treatment subsequently by the British; who affected to consider him a deserter, from his having formerly served in their army.

Wilkinson, who was at that time conversant with the cabals of the camp, and apparently in the confidence of some of the leaders, points out what he considers the true secret of Lee's conduct. His military reputation, originally very high, had been enhanced of late, by its being generally known that he had been opposed to the occupation of Fort Washington; while the fall of that fortress and other misfortunes of the campaign, though beyond the control of the commander-in-chief, had quickened the discontent which, according to Wilkinson, had been generated against him at Cambridge, and raised a party against him in Congress. "It

was confidently asserted at the time," adds he, "but is not worthy of credit, that a motion had been made in that body tending to supersede him in the command of the army. In this temper of the times, if General Lee had anticipated General Washington in cutting the cordon of the enemy between New York and the Delaware, the commander-in-chief would probably have been superseded. In this case, Lee would have succeeded him."

What an unfortunate change would it have been for the country! Lee was undoubtedly a man of brilliant talents, shrewd sagacity, and much knowledge and experience in the art of war; but he was wilful and uncertain in his temper, self-indulgent in his habits, and an egoist in warfare: boldly dashing for a soldier's glory rather than warily acting for a country's good. He wanted those great moral qualities which, in addition to military capacity, inspired such universal confidence in the wisdom, rectitude, and patriotism of Washington, enabling him to direct and control legislative bodies as well as armies; to harmonize the jarring passions and jealousies of a wide and imperfect confederacy, and to cope with the varied exigencies of the Revolution.

The very retreat which Washington had just effected through the Jerseys bore evidence to

his generalship. Thomas Paine, who had accompanied the army "from Fort Lee to the edge of Pennsylvania," thus speaks in one of his writings published at the time: "With a handful of men we sustained an orderly retreat for nearly an hundred miles, brought off our ammunition, all our field-pieces, the greatest part of our stores, and had four rivers to pass. None can say that our retreat was precipitate, for we were three weeks in performing it, that the country might have time to come in. Twice we marched back to meet the enemy, and remained out until dark. The sign of fear was not seen in our camp; and had not some of the cowardly and disaffected inhabitants spread false alarms through the country, the Jerseys had never been ravaged."

And this is his testimony to the moral qualities of the commander-in-chief, as evinced in this time of perils and hardships: "Voltaire has remarked, that King William never appeared to full advantage but in difficulties and in action. The same remark may be made of General Washington, for the character fits him. There is a natural firmness in some minds, which cannot be unlocked by trifles; but which, when unlocked, discovers a cabinet of fortitude; and I reckon it among those

kinds of public blessings which we do not immediately see, that God hath blessed him with uninterrupted health, and given him a mind that can even flourish upon care." *

* *American Crisis*, No. 1.

Chapter XXVIII.

Washington Clothed with Additional Powers—Recruitment of the Army—Increased Pay—Colonel John Cadwalader—Arrival of Sullivan—Gates—Wilkinson — A *Coup de Main* Meditated — Posture of Affairs at Trenton—Gates Declines to Take a Part—His Comments on Washington's Plans—Preparations for the *Coup de Main* — Crossing of the Delaware—Attack on the Enemy's Forces at Trenton —Death of Rahl—His Character.

"BEFORE you receive this letter," writes Washington to his brother Augustine, "you will undoubtedly have heard of the captivity of General Lee. This is an additional misfortune; and the more vexatious, as it was by his own folly and imprudence, and without a view to effect any good, that he was taken. As he went to lodge three miles out of his own camp, and within twenty miles of the enemy, a rascally tory rode in the night to give notice of it to the enemy, who sent a party of light horse that seized him, and

carried him off with every mark of triumph and indignity."

This is the severest comment that the magnanimous spirit of Washington permitted him to make on the conduct and fortunes of the man who would have supplanted him; and this is made in his private correspondence with his brother. No harsh strictures on them appear in his official letters to Congress or the Board of War; nothing but regret for his capture, as a loss to the service.

In the same letter he speaks of the critical state of affairs: "If every nerve is not strained to recruit the army with all possible expedition, I think the game is pretty nearly up. . . . You can form no idea of the perplexity of my situation. No man I believe ever had a greater choice of evils and less means to extricate himself from them. However, under a full persuasion of the justice of our cause, I cannot entertain an idea that it will finally sink, though it may remain for some time under a cloud."

Fortunately, Congress, prior to their adjournment, had resolved that "until they should otherwise order, General Washington should be possessed of all power to order and direct all things relative to the department and to the operations of war." Thus empowered, he proceeded immediately to recruit three battalions

of artillery. To those whose terms were expiring, he promised an augmentation of twenty-five per cent. upon their pay, and a bounty of ten dollars to the men for six weeks' service. "It was no time," he said, "to stand upon expense; nor in matters of self-evident exigency, to refer to Congress at the distance of a hundred and thirty or forty miles." "If any good officers will offer to raise men upon continental pay and establishment in this quarter, I shall encourage them to do so, and regiment them when they have done it. It may be thought that I am going a good deal out of the line of my duty, to adopt these measures, or to advise thus freely. A character to lose, an estate to forfeit, the inestimable blessings of liberty at stake, and a life devoted, must be my excuse." *

The promise of increased pay and bounties had kept together for a time the dissolving army. The local militia began to turn out freely. Colonel John Cadwalader, a gentleman of gallant spirit, and cultivated mind and manners, brought a large volunteer detachment, well equipped, and composed principally of Philadelphia troops. Washington, who held Cadwalader in high esteem, assigned him an important station at Bristol, with Colonel Reed,

* Letter to the President of Congress.

who was his intimate friend, as an associate. They had it in charge to keep a watchful eye upon Count Donop's Hessians, who were cantoned along the opposite shore from Bordentown to the Black Horse.

On the 20th of December arrived General Sullivan in camp, with the troops recently commanded by the unlucky Lee. They were in a miserable plight; destitute of almost everything; many of them fit only for the hospital, and those whose terms were nearly out, thinking of nothing but their discharge. About four hundred of them, who were Rhode Islanders, were sent down under Colonel Hitchcock to reinforce Cadwalader; who was now styled brigadier-general by courtesy, lest the continental troops might object to act under his command.

On the same day arrived General Gates, with the remnants of four regiments from the Northern army. With him came Wilkinson, who now resumed his station as brigade-major in St. Clair's brigade, to which he belonged. To his memoirs we are indebted for notices of the commander-in-chief. "When the divisions of Sullivan and Gates joined General Washington," writes Wilkinson, "he found his numbers increased, yet his difficulties were not sensibly diminished; ten days would disband

his corps and leave him 1,400 men, miserably provided in all things. I saw him in that gloomy period; dined with him, and attentively marked his aspect; always grave and thoughtful, he appeared at that time pensive and solemn in the extreme."

There were vivid schemes forming under that solemn aspect. The time seemed now propitious for the *coup de main* which Washington had of late been meditating. Everything showed careless confidence on the part of the enemy. Howe was in winter quarters at New York. His troops were loosely cantoned about the Jerseys, from the Delaware to Brunswick, so that they could not readily be brought to act in concert on a sudden alarm. The Hessians were in the advance, stationed along the Delaware, facing the American lines, which were along the west bank. Cornwallis, thinking his work accomplished, had obtained leave of absence, and was likewise at New York, preparing to embark for England. Washington had now between five and six thousand men fit for service; with these he meditated to cross the river at night, at different points, and make simultaneous attacks upon the Hessian advance posts.

He calculated upon the eager support of his troops, who were burning to revenge the out-

rages on their homes and families, committed by these foreign mercenaries. They considered the Hessians mere hirelings; slaves to a petty despot, fighting for sordid pay, and actuated by no sentiment of patriotism or honor. They had rendered themselves the horror of the Jerseys, by rapine, brutality, and heartlessness. At first, their military discipline had inspired awe, but of late they had become careless and unguarded, knowing the broken and dispirited state of the Americans, and considering them incapable of any offensive enterprise.

A brigade of three Hessian regiments, those of Rahl,* Lossberg, and Knyphausen, was stationed at Trenton. Colonel Rahl had the command of the post at his own solicitation, and in consequence of the laurels he had gained at White Plains and Fort Washington. We have before us journals of two Hessian lieutenants and a corporal, which give graphic particulars of the colonel and his post. According to their representations, he, with all his bravery, was little fitted for such an important command. He lacked the necessary vigilance and forecast.

* Seldom has a name of so few letters been spelled so many ways as that of this commander. We find it written Rall in the military journals before us; yet we adhere to the one hitherto adopted by us, apparently on good authority.

One of the lieutenants speaks of him in a sarcastic vein, and evidently with some degree of prejudice. According to his account, there was more bustle than business at the post. The men were harassed with watches, detachments, and pickets, without purpose and without end. The cannon must be drawn forth every day from their proper places, and paraded about the town, seemingly only to make a stir and uproar.

The lieutenant was especially annoyed by the colonel's passion for music. Whether his men when off duty were well or ill clad, whether they kept their muskets clean and bright, and their ammunition in good order, was of little moment to the colonel, he never inquired about it; but the music! that was the thing! the hautboys—he never could have enough of them. The main guard was at no great distance from his quarters, and the music could not linger there long enough. There was a church close by, surrounded by palings; the officer on guard must march round and round it, with his men and musicians, looking, says the lieutenant, like a Catholic procession, wanting only the cross and the banner, and chanting choristers.

According to the same authority, Rahl was a boon companion; made merry until a late

hour in the night, and then lay in bed until nine o'clock in the morning. When the officers came to parade between ten and eleven o'clock, and presented themselves at headquarters, he was often in his bath, and the guard must be kept waiting half an hour longer. On parade, too, when any other commander would take occasion to talk with his staff officers and others upon duty about the concerns of the garrison, the colonel attended to nothing but the music—he was wrapped up in it, to the great disgust of the testy lieutenant.

And then, according to the latter, he took no precautions against the possibility of being attacked. A veteran officer, Major von Dechow, proposed that some works should be thrown up, where the cannon might be placed, ready against any assault. "Works! — pooh — pooh": the colonel made merry with the very idea—using an unseemly jest, which we forbear to quote. "An assault by the rebels! let them come! We 'll at them with the bayonet."

The veteran Dechow gravely persisted in his counsel. "Herr Colonel," said he, respectfully, "it costs almost nothing; if it does not help, it does not harm." The pragmatical lieutenant, too, joined in the advice, and offered to undertake the work. The jovial colonel

only repeated his joke, went away laughing at them both, and no works were thrown up.

The lieutenant, sorely nettled, observes, sneeringly: "He believed the name of Rahl more fearful and redoubtable than all the works of Vauban and Cohorn, and that no rebel would dare to encounter it. A fit man truly to command a corps! and still more to defend a place lying so near an enemy having a hundred times his advantages. Everything with him was done heedlessly and without forecast." *

Such is the account given of this brave, but inconsiderate and light-hearted commander; given, however, by an officer not of his regiment. The honest corporal already mentioned, who was one of Rahl's own men, does him more justice. According to his journal, rumors that the Americans meditated an attack had aroused the vigilance of the colonel, and on the 21st of December he had reconnoitered the banks of the Delaware, with a strong detachment, quite to Frankfort, to see if there were any movements of the Americans indicative of an intention to cross the river. He had returned without seeing any; but had since caused pickets and alarm posts to be stationed every night outside the town.†

* Tagebuch eines Hessischen Officiers.—MS.

† Tagebuch des Corporals Johannes Reuber.—MS.

Such was the posture of affairs at Trenton at the time the *coup de main* was meditated.

Whatever was to be done, however, must be done quickly, before the river was frozen. An intercepted letter had convinced Washington of what he had before suspected, that Howe was only waiting for that event to resume active operations, cross the river on the ice, and push triumphantly to Philadelphia.

He communicated his project to Gates, and wished him to go to Bristol, take command there, and co-operate from that quarter. Gates, however, pleaded ill health, and requested leave to proceed to Philadelphia.*

The request may have surprised Washington, considering the spirited enterprise that was on foot; but Gates, as has before been observed, had a disinclination to serve immediately under the commander-in-chief; like Lee, he had a disparaging opinion of him, or rather an impatience of his supremacy. He had, moreover, an ulterior object in view. Having been disappointed and chagrined, in finding himself subordinate to General Schuyler in the Northern campaign, he was now intent on making interest among the members of Congress for an independent command. Washington urged that, on his way to Phila-

* Washington to Gates. Gates's papers.

delphia, he would at least stop for a day or two at Bristol, to concert a plan of operations with Reed and Cadwalader, and adjust any little questions of etiquette and command that might arise between the continental colonels who had gone thither with Lee's troops and the volunteer officers stationed there.

He does not appear to have complied even with this request. According to Wilkinson's account, he took quarters at Newtown, and set out thence for Baltimore on the 24th of December, the very date before that of the intended *coup de main*. He prevailed on Wilkinson to accompany him as far as Philadelphia. On the road he appeared to be much depressed in spirits; but he relieved himself, like Lee, by criticising the plans of the commander-in-chief. "He frequently," writes Wilkinson, "expressed the opinion that, while Washington was watching the enemy above Trenton, they would construct bateaux, pass the Delaware in his rear, and take possession of Philadelphia before he was aware; and that, instead of vainly attempting to stop Sir William Howe at the Delaware, General Washington ought to retire to the south of the Susquehanna, and there form an army. *He said it was his intention to propose this measure to Congress at Baltimore*, and urged me to accompany

him to that place; but my duty forbade the thought."

Here we have somewhat of a counterpart to Lee's project of eclipsing the commander-in-chief. Evidently the two military veterans who had once been in conclave with him at Mount Vernon considered the truncheon of command falling from his grasp.

The projected attack upon the Hessian posts was to be threefold.

1st. Washington was to cross the Delaware with a considerable force, at McKonkey's Ferry (now Taylorsville), about nine miles above Trenton, and march down upon that place, where Rahl's cantonment comprised a brigade of fifteen hundred Hessians, a troop of British light horse, and a number of chasseurs.

2d. General Ewing, with a body of Pennsylvania militia, was to cross at a ferry about a mile below Trenton; secure the bridge over the Assunpink Creek, a stream flowing along the south side of the town, and cut off any retreat of the enemy in that direction.

3d. General Putnam, with the troops occupied in fortifying Philadelphia, and those under General Cadwalader, was to cross below Burlington, and attack the lower posts under Count Donop. The several divisions were to

cross the Delaware at night, so as to be ready for simultaneous action, by five o'clock in the morning.

Seldom is a combined plan carried into full operation. Symptoms of an insurrection in Philadelphia, obliged Putnam to remain with some force in that city; but he detached five or six hundred of the Pennsylvania militia under Colonel Griffin, his adjutant-general, who threw himself into the Jerseys, to be at hand to co-operate with Cadwalader.

A letter from Washington to Colonel Reed, who was stationed with Cadwalader, shows the anxiety of his mind, and his consciousness of the peril of the enterprise.

"Christmas day at night, one hour before day, is the time fixed upon for our attempt upon Trenton. For Heaven's sake keep this to yourself, as the discovery of it may prove fatal to us; our numbers, I am sorry to say, being less than I had any conception of; yet nothing but necessity, dire necessity, will, nay must, justify an attack. Prepare, and in concert with Griffin, attack as many of their posts as you posssibly can, with a prospect of success; the more we can attack at the same instant, the more confusion we shall spread, and the greater good will result from it. . . . I have ordered our men to be provided with

three days' provision ready cooked, with which, and their blankets, they are to march; for if we are successful, which Heaven grant, and the circumstances favor, we may push on. I shall direct every ferry and ford to be well guarded, and not a soul suffered to pass without an officer's going down with the permit. Do the same with you."

It has been said that Christmas night was fixed upon for the enterprise, because the Germans are prone to revel and carouse on that festival, and it was supposed a great part of the troops would be intoxicated, and in a state of disorder and confusion; but in truth Washington would have chosen an earlier day, had it been in his power. "We could not ripen matters for the attack before the time mentioned," said he in his letter to Reed, "so much out of sorts, and so much in want of everything are the troops under Sullivan."

Early on the eventful evening (Dec. 25th), the troops destined for Washington's part of the attack, about two thousand four hundred strong, with a train of twenty small pieces, were paraded near McKonkey's Ferry, ready to pass as soon as it grew dark, in the hope of being all on the other side by twelve o'clock. Washington repaired to the ground accompanied by Generals Greene, Sullivan, Mercer,

Stephen, and Lord Stirling. Greene was full of ardor for the enterprise; eager, no doubt, to wipe out the recollection of Fort Washington. It was, indeed, an anxious moment for all.

We have here some circumstances furnished to us by the memoirs of Wilkinson. That officer had returned from Philadelphia, and brought a letter from Gates to Washington. There was some snow on the ground, and he had traced the march of the troops for the last few miles by the blood from the feet of those whose shoes were broken. Being directed to Washington's quarters, he found him, he says, alone, with his whip in his hand, prepared to mount his horse. "When I presented the letter of General Gates to him, before receiving it, he exclaimed with solemnity,—'What a time is this to hand me letters!' I answered that I had been charged with it by General Gates. 'By General Gates! Where is he?' 'I left him this morning in Philadelphia.' 'What was he doing there?' 'I understood him that he was on his way to Congress.' He earnestly repeated, 'On his way to Congress!' then broke the seal, and I made my bow, and joined General St. Clair on the bank of the river."

Did Washington surmise the incipient in-

trigues and cabals, that were already aiming to undermine him? Had Gates's eagerness to push on to Congress, instead of remaining with the army in a moment of daring enterprise, suggested any doubts as to his object? Perhaps not. Washington's nature was too noble to be suspicious, and yet he had received sufficient cause to be distrustful.

Boats being in readiness, the troops began to cross about sunset. The weather was intensely cold; the wind was high, the current strong, the river full of floating ice. Colonel Glover, with his amphibious regiment of Marblehead fishermen, was in advance; the same who had navigated the army across the Sound, in its retreat from Brooklyn on Long Island, to New York. They were men accustomed to battle with the elements, yet with all their skill and experience, the crossing was difficult and perilous. Washington, who had crossed with the troops, stood anxiously, yet patiently, on the eastern bank, while one precious hour after another elapsed, until the transportation of the artillery should be effected. The night was dark and tempestuous, the drifting ice drove the boats out of their course, and threatened them with destruction. Colonel Knox, who attended to the crossing of the artillery, assisted with his labors, but

still more with his "stentorian lungs," giving orders and directions.

It was three o'clock before the artillery was landed, and nearly four before the troops took up their line of march. Trenton was nine miles distant, and not to be reached before daylight. To surprise it, therefore, was out of the question. There was no making a retreat without being discovered, and harassed in repassing the river. Besides, the troops from the other points might have crossed, and co-operation was essential to their safety. Washington resolved to push forward, and trust to Providence.

He formed the troops into two columns. The first he led himself, accompanied by Greene, Stirling, Mercer, and Stephen; it was to make a circuit by the upper or Pennington road, to the north of Trenton. The other, led by Sullivan, and including the brigade of St. Clair, was to take the lower river road, leading to the west end of the town. Sullivan's column was to halt a few moments at a cross-road leading to Howland's Ferry, to give Washington's column time to effect its circuit, so that the attack might be simultaneous. On arriving at Trenton, they were to force the outer guards, and push directly into the town before the enemy had time to form.

The Hessian journals before us enable us to give the reader a glance into the opposite camp on this eventful night. The situation of Washington was more critical than he was aware. Notwithstanding the secrecy with which his plans had been conducted, Colonel Rahl had received a warning from General Grant, at Princeton, of the intended attack, and of the very time it was to be made, but stating that it was to be by a detachment under Lord Stirling. Rahl was accordingly on the alert.

It so happened that about dusk of this very evening, when Washington must have been preparing to cross the Delaware, there were alarm guns and firing at the Trenton outpost. The whole garrison was instantly drawn out under arms, and Colonel Rahl hastened to the outpost. It was found in confusion, and six men wounded. A body of men had emerged from the woods, fired upon the picket, and immediately retired.* Colonel Rahl, with two com-

* Who it was that made this attack upon the outpost is not clearly ascertained. The Hessian lieutenant who commanded at the picket, says it was a patrol sent out by Washington, under command of a captain, to reconnoiter, with strict orders not to engage, but if discovered, to retire instantly as silently as possible. Colonel Reed, in a memorandum, says it was an advance party returning from the Jerseys to Pennsylvania.—See *Life and Corresp.*, vol. i., p. 277.

panies and a field-piece, marched through the woods, and made the rounds of the outposts, but seeing and hearing nothing, and finding all quiet, returned. Supposing this to be the attack against which he had been warned, and that it was "a mere flash in the pan," he relapsed into his feeling of security; and, as the night was cold and stormy, permitted the troops to return to their quarters and lay aside their arms. Thus the garrison and its unwary commander slept in fancied security, at the very time that Washington and his troops were making their toilsome way across the Delaware. How perilous would have been their situation had their enemy been more vigilant!

It began to hail and snow as the troops commenced their march, and increased in violence as they advanced, the storm driving the sleet in their faces. So bitter was the cold that two of the men were frozen to death that night. The day dawned by the time Sullivan halted at the cross-road. It was discovered that the storm had rendered many of the muskets wet and useless. "What is to be done?" inquired Sullivan of St. Clair. "You have nothing for it but to push on, and use the bayonet," was the reply. While some of the soldiers were endeavoring to clear their muskets, and squibbing off priming, Sullivan despatched an offi-

cer to apprise the commander-in-chief of the condition of their arms. He came back half dismayed by an indignant burst of Washington, who ordered him to return instantly and tell General Sullivan to "advance and charge."

It was about eight o'clock when Washington's column arrived in the vicinity of the village. The storm, which had rendered the march intolerable, had kept every one within doors, and the snow had deadened the tread of the troops and the rumbling of the artillery. As they approached the village, Washington, who was in front, came to a man that was chopping wood by the roadside, and inquired, "Which way is the Hessian picket?" "I don't know," was the surly reply. "You may tell," said Captain Forest of the artillery, "for that is General Washington." The aspect of the man changed in an instant. Raising his hands to heaven, "God bless and prosper you!" cried he. "The picket is in that house, and the sentry stands near that tree." *

The advance guard was led by a brave young officer, Captain William A. Washington, seconded by Lieutenant James Monroe (in after years President of the United States). They received orders to dislodge the picket. Here happened to be stationed the very lieutenant

* Wilkinson's *Memoirs*, vol. i., p. 129.

whose censures of the negligence of Colonel Rahl we have just quoted. By his own account, he was very near being entrapped in the guard-house. His sentries, he says, were not alert enough; and had he not stepped out of the picket house himself and discovered the enemy, they would have been upon him before his men could scramble to their arms. "Der feind! der feind! heraus! heraus!" (the enemy! the enemy! turn out! turn out!) was now the cry. He at first, he says, made a stand, thinking he had a mere marauding party to deal with; but seeing heavy battalions at hand, gave way, and fell back upon a company stationed to support the picket; but which appears to have been no better prepared against surprise.

By this time the American artillery was unlimbered; Washington kept beside it, and the column proceeded. The report of fire-arms told that Sullivan was at the lower end of the town. Colonel Stark led his advance guard, and did it in gallant style. The attacks, as concerted, were simultaneous. The outposts were driven in; they retreated, firing from behind houses. The Hessian drums beat to arms; the trumpets of the light horse sounded the alarm; the whole place was in an uproar. Some of the enemy made a wild and undirected

fire from the windows of their quarters; others rushed forth in disorder, and attempted to form in the main street, while dragoons hastily mounted, and galloping about, added to the confusion. Washington advanced with his column to the head of King Street, riding beside Captain Forest of the artillery. When Forest's battery of six guns was opened the general kept on the left and advanced with it, giving directions to the fire. His position was an exposed one, and he was repeatedly entreated to fall back; but all such entreaties were useless, when once he became heated in action.

The enemy were training a couple of cannon in the main street to form a battery, which might have given the Americans a serious check; but Captain Washington and Lieutenant Monroe, with a part of the advanced guard, rushed forward, drove the artillerists from their guns, and took the two pieces when on the point of being fired. Both of these officers were wounded; the captain in the wrist, the lieutenant in the shoulder.

While Washington advanced on the north of the town, Sullivan approached on the west, and detached Stark to press on the lower or south end of the town. The British light horse, and about five hundred Hessians and chasseurs,

had been quartered in the lower part of the town. Seeing Washington's column pressing in front, and hearing Stark thundering in their rear, they took headlong flight by the bridge across the Assunpink, and so along the banks of the Delaware toward Count Donop's encampment at Bordentown. Had Washington's plan been carried into full effect, their retreat would have been cut off by General Ewing; but that officer had been prevented from crossing the river by the ice.

Colonel Rahl, according to the account of the lieutenant who had commanded the picket, completely lost his head in the confusion of the surprise. The latter, when driven in by the American advance, found the colonel on horseback, endeavoring to rally his panic-stricken and disordered men, but himself sorely bewildered. He asked the lieutenant what was the force of the assailants. The latter answered that he had seen four or five battalions in the woods, three of them had fired upon him before he had retreated—"but," added he, "there are other troops to the right and left, and the town will soon be surrounded." The colonel rode in front of his troops: "Forward! march! advance! advance!" cried he. With some difficulty he succeeded in extricating his troops from the town, and leading them into

an adjacent orchard. Now was the time, writes the lieutenant, for him to have pushed for another place, there to make a stand. At this critical moment he might have done so with credit, and without loss. The colonel seems to have had such an intention. A rapid retreat by the Princeton road was apparently in his thoughts; but he lacked decision. The idea of flying before the rebels was intolerable. Some one, too, exclaimed at the ruinous loss of leaving all their baggage to be plundered by the enemy. Changing his mind, he made a rash resolve. "All who are my grenadiers, forward!" cried he, and went back, writes his corporal, like a storm upon the town. "What madness was this!" writes the critical lieutenant. "A town that was of no use to us; that but ten or fifteen minutes before he had gladly left; that was now filled with three or four thousand enemies, stationed in houses or behind walls and hedges, and a battery of six cannon planted on the main street. And he to think of retaking it with his six or seven hundred men and their bayonets!"

Still he led his grenadiers bravely but rashly on, when, in the midst of his career, he received a fatal wound from a musket ball, and fell from his horse. His men, left without their chief, were struck with dismay; heedless of the

orders of the second in command, they retreated by the right up the banks of the Assunpink, intending to escape to Princeton. Washington saw the design, and threw Colonel Hand's corps of Pennsylvania riflemen in their way; while a body of Virginia troops gained their left. Brought to a stand, and perfectly bewildered, Washington thought they were forming in order of battle, and ordered a discharge of canister shot. "Sir, they have struck," exclaimed Forest. "Struck!" echoed the general. "Yes, sir, their colors are down." "So they are!" replied Washington, and spurred in that direction, followed by Forest and his whole command. The men grounded their arms and surrendered at discretion; "but had not Colonel Rahl been severely wounded," remarks his loyal corporal, "we would never have been taken alive!"

The skirmishing had now ceased in every direction. Major Wilkinson, who was with the lower column, was sent to the commander-in-chief for orders. He rode up, he says, at the moment that Colonel Rahl, supported by a file of sergeants, was presenting his sword. "On my approach," continues he, "the commander-in-chief took me by the hand and observed, 'Major Wilkinson, this is a glorious day for our country!' his countenance beam-

ing with complacency; whilst the unfortunate Rahl, who the day before would not have changed fortunes with him, now pale, bleeding, and covered with blood, in broken accents seemed to implore those attentions which the victor was well disposed to bestow on him."

He was, in fact, conveyed with great care to his quarters, which were in the house of a kind and respectable Quaker family.

The number of prisoners taken in this affair was nearly one thousand, of which thirty-two were officers. The veteran Major von Dechow, who had urged in vain the throwing up of breastworks, received a mortal wound, of which he died in Trenton. Washington's triumph, however, was impaired by the failure of the two simultaneous attacks. General Ewing, who was to have crossed before day at Trenton Ferry, and taken possession of the bridge leading out of the town, over which the light horse and Hessians retreated, was prevented by the quantity of ice in the river. Cadwalader was hindered by the same obstacle. He got part of his troops over, but found it impossible to embark his cannon, and was obliged, therefore, to return to the Pennsylvania side of the river. Had he and Ewing crossed, Donop's quarters would have been beaten up, and the fugitives from Trenton intercepted.

By the failure of this part of his plan, Washington had been exposed to the most imminent hazard. The force with which he had crossed, twenty-four hundred men, raw troops, was not enough to cope with the veteran garrison, had it been properly on its guard; and then there were the troops under Donop at hand to co-operate with it. Nothing saved him but the utter panic of the enemy; their want of proper alarm places, and their exaggerated idea of his forces: for one of the journals before us (the corporal's) states that he had with him 15,000 men, and another 6,000.* Even now that the place was in his possession he dared not linger in it. There was a superior force under Donop below him, and a strong battalion of infantry at Princeton. His own troops were exhausted by the operations of the night and morning in cold, rain, snow, and storm. They had to guard about a thousand prisoners, taken in action or found concealed in houses; there was little prospect of succor, owing to the season and the state of the river. Washington gave up, therefore, all idea of immediately pursuing

*The lieutenant gives the latter number on the authority of Lord Stirling; but his lordship meant the whole number intended for the three several attacks. The force that actually crossed with Washington was what we have stated.

the enemy or keeping possession of Trenton, and determined to recross the Delaware with his prisoners and captured artillery. Understanding that the brave but unfortunate Rahl was in a dying state, he paid him a visit before leaving Trenton, accompanied by General Greene. They found him at his quarters in the house of a Quaker family. Their visit and the respectful consideration and unaffected sympathy manifested by them, evidently soothed the feelings of the unfortunate soldier; now stripped of his late won laurels, and resigned to die rather than outlive his honor.*

We have given a somewhat sarcastic portrait of the colonel drawn by one of his lieutenants; another, Lieutenant Piel, paints with a soberer and more reliable pencil.

"For our whole ill luck," writes he, "we have to thank Colonel Rahl. It never occurred to him that the rebels might attack us; and, therefore, he had taken scarce any precautions against such an event. In truth I must confess we have universally thought too little of the rebels, who, until now, have never on any occasion been able to withstand us. Our brigadier (Rahl) was too proud to retire a step before such an enemy; although nothing remained for us but to retreat.

* *Journal of Lieutenant Piel.*

"General Howe had judged this man from a wrong point of view, or he would hardly have intrusted such an important post as Trenton to him. He was formed for a soldier, but not for a general. At the capture of Fort Washington he had gained much honor while under the command of a great general, but he lost all his renown at Trenton where he himself was general. He had courage to dare the hardiest enterprise; but he alone wanted the cool presence of mind necessary in a surprise like that at Trenton. His vivacity was too great; one thought crowded on another so that he could come to no decision. Considered as a private man, he was deserving of high regard. He was generous, open-handed, hospitable: never cringing to his superiors, nor arrogant to his inferiors; but courteous to all. Even his domestics were treated more like friends than servants."

The loyal corporal, too, contributes his mite of praise to his dying commander. "In his last agony," writes the grateful soldier, "he yet thought of his grenadiers, and entreated General Washington that nothing might be taken from them but their arms. A promise was given," adds the corporal, and "was kept."

Even the satirical lieutenant half mourns

over his memory. "He died," says he, "on the following evening, and lies buried in this place which he has rendered so famous, in the graveyard of the Presbyterian church. Sleep well! dear Commander! (theurer Feldherr). The Americans will hereafter set up a stone above thy grave with this inscription:

"'Hier liegt der Oberst Rahl,
Mit ihm ist alles all!'"

(Here lies the Colonel Rahl,
With him all is over.)

END OF VOLUME III.